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PRACTICAL AND FAMILIAR

SERMONS.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
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PRACTICAL AND FAMILIAR

SERMONS,

DESIGNED FOR

PAROCHIAL AND DOMESTIC INSTRUCTION.

BY THE REV. EDWARD COOPER,

RECTOR OF HAMSTALL-RIDWARE AND OF YOXALL IN THE COUNTY OF STAFFORD, AND FORMERLY FELLOW OF ALL-SOULS' COLLEGE, OXFORD.

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VOL. I.

THE FOURTEENTH EDITION.

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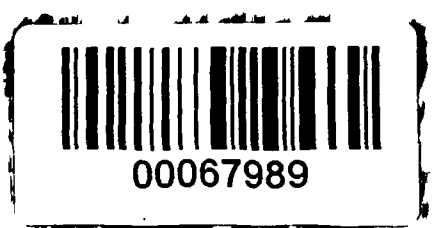
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TO

THE REVEREND

THOMAS GISBORNE, M.A.

THE FOLLOWING SERMONS

ARE

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

BY HIS FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

In the publication of modern Sermons, too little attention appears to have been paid to the illiterate classes of the Community. Some attempts, indeed, have been made to furnish them with Discourses adapted to their capacities; but without any disparagement to these attempts, it may be safely asserted, that the supply has not been adequate to the demand. The considerate Clergyman can find but few volumes written with such plainness of language, as to allow of his circulating them in his Parish, with the hope of their being generally understood. This is a defect, which the writer, in common with many other Parochial Ministers, has long felt and deplored; and which it is his desire and endeavour by the

present publication in some measure to remedy. How far he has succeeded in the attempt, his readers must determine. For his own part he freely confesses, that he has fallen far short of that imaginary standard which he had proposed to his own mind for imitation.

He is not, indeed, of opinion, that no word is to be introduced into a Sermon, which is not in itself intelligible to every person who hears it. Such a degree of refinement he scarcely believes to be attainable: nor, if attainable, does he deem it necessary. The general impression of a discourse may be very powerful, though the precise meaning of every word be not distinctly apprehended. If the ideas be simple, and the train of thought level to the understanding, the occasional occurrence of a word or a phrase, somewhat less intelligible, will not so interrupt the sense, as probably even to weaken, much less to destroy, the main effect, while in a *very* studious endeavour to adapt the style of a discourse to the capacity of the

ignorant, there is a danger of becoming insipid or vulgar; and thus of exciting impatience and disgust in another part of the congregation, whose favourable attention it is equally important to conciliate and secure. On these grounds the Writer has not paid that minute attention to the Phraseology of his Sermons, which the supposed Canon of composition, if rigidly enforced, would require. Where a word or phrase, not strictly level to the lowest capacity, could not have been omitted or changed, without evident injury to the sense or force of a passage, he has suffered it to remain. He trusts, however, that such instances will be found to be rare; and that few places will occur, which the unlearned cannot sufficiently understand.

As to the Doctrines which characterise this volume, the Writer in a former publication has given a pledge of what may be expected. The same leading doctrines of the Gospel, which he before attempted to elucidate, are those, which in his present

work he aims to enforce and disseminate. He then fully believed them to be the Doctrines of the Bible, and of the Church of England; and he has since found no reason to alter his opinion.

It only remains for him to express his earnest wishes, that the Divine Blessing may attend this humble endeavour, and make it instrumental in glorifying GOD, and saving souls, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Hamstall-Ridware,
Dec. 19th, 1808.

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SERMON I.

THE FOOLISH BARGAIN.

MATTHEW, xvi. 26.

What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

No person can hear these questions without understanding them. Their meaning is plain. They speak for themselves, and carry with them their own answer. Our blessed LORD, in asking them, clearly intended to lay down this aweful and interesting truth: 'That the man, who for the sake of worldly happiness, however great, shall lose his soul, will make a most foolish bargain, and in the end will bitterly repent what he has done.'

This Truth I shall endeavour to explain and prove.

In judging of a bargain, whether it be good or bad, two particulars must be taken into account, the thing bought, and the price given for it. These must be compared to-

gether; for it is the proportion which they bear in value to each other, that shows what the bargain is. If the thing bought be clearly worth far less than what is given for it, we pronounce the bargain to be bad. Now in the bargain of which we speak, the thing bought is *Worldly Happiness:* the price given for it is *the Soul.* What proportion do these things bear in value to each other? To answer this question, we must enquire into their separate value, so as to see what each of them is really worth.

I. Worldly happiness is that happiness, which is to be found in the pursuit, or the enjoyment of worldly things; that happiness, which springs from the gratification of our sensual, our ambitious, or our covetous desires. And certainly we must allow, that taken by itself, this happiness is considerable. A man doubtless feels no small satisfaction and delight, in gaining honours and riches, in exercising power, in indulging his lusts and appetites. It is not by under-rating worldly happiness, and by representing it as less valuable than it really is, that we shall endeavour to prove our point. We will give to it all the advantage which its warmest friends can desire. We will allow their enjoyments to be as great as they are said to be. We will go even farther. We will take no notice

of all those interruptions and disappointments, to which, from a thousand causes, worldly happiness is liable. We will suppose, that it is entirely free from these things; that the body is never tortured with pain; that the mind is never wrung with grief; that every thing goes on smoothly; that every wish is gratified, every desire accomplished, every hope fulfilled. This indeed is admitting a great deal: but no more than our Saviour himself seems to have admitted for the time; when he speaks of a man's *gaining the whole world;* which we may fairly interpret to mean, his gaining as much happiness as the world can *possibly* bestow.

But after all these allowances in favour of worldly happiness, there is one thing to be mentioned on the opposite side. There is one weight to be thrown into the opposite scale, which takes not a little from its worth, and which, therefore, in enquiring into its real value, must not be passed over. It is this: all worldly happiness must come to an end. "The things which are seen, are temporal." Worldly things are but for a time, for a season. They are in their nature perishable, and cannot last for ever. "The fashion of this world passeth away." Let a man's enjoyments, then, in the world

be as great and lasting, as on the largest supposition they can possibly be, still a time must come, when they will cease. There is a day, beyond which they cannot last. When that day comes, either he will be taken from his enjoyments, or they will be taken from him. Either he will be stript of them altogether, or he will lose the power of using them, or he will be removed to a place, whither he cannot carry them; and where the having formerly had them will be of no advantage, nor the recollection of it yield any satisfaction. From this view we may form some judgement of the real value of Worldly Happiness.

II. As to the worth of the soul.

The worth of the soul will, in some degree, appear, from this consideration, that it is the most excellent part of man. It is that part of him, which thinks and wills; that part of him, which governs and directs the body. The body can do nothing without the soul. It is the soul, which moves the body, and tells it where to go and what to do. It is the soul which hopes and fears; which grieves and rejoices; which desires and hates, and loves. If the soul be taken away, the body becomes a lifeless mass, without sense or mo-

tion. But the soul can live without being joined to the body. We are expressly told that "they which kill the body, are not able to kill the soul." * The soul is a spirit, and when parted from the body, it still thinks and wills as it did before; it still feels and remembers, and is conscious of what it is, of what it has done, and of what it is doing. So that in fact a man's soul is a man's self. It is that part, which is really the man: and thus we find St. Luke saying in the passage, which in his gospel answers to the text, "What is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose *himself?*" †

But there is another consideration, which shows, in a far higher degree, the worth of the soul. It is this. The soul not only lives, and thinks, and feels, even when parted from the body; but it will live, and think, and feel, for ever. It is immortal. It will never die. It came forth from GOD, and, like GOD himself, will never cease to be. It will live to all eternity. — My brethren, did you ever seriously try to consider what eternity is, or what is meant by living to all eternity? We may form some notion about time: for we reckon and compare it, and so may understand

* Matthew, x. 28. † Luke, ix. 25.

something of what it is. But eternity —— aweful word! what can we know of it? It is above our thoughts, and beyond our understanding. We may have some idea of what it would be to live for millions and millions of years. But to think, that after these are gone, still millions and millions of years are to come; that even when these are ended, eternity is still before us; to consider, that at the utmost distance of time which we can count or conceive, the soul will still be living, and thinking, and feeling: and at the same time will be no nearer to an end, than it is at this present moment. What a vast, what a wonderful idea! Of what inestimable value must the soul be! Who can compute its worth?

But there is yet a further consideration to be added: The value of a thing is oftentimes best known when it is lost. Now the soul may be lost. The man who makes the bargain in the text, who sells his soul for the sake of worldly happiness, is said to *lose* his soul. What is meant by this expression? By the soul being lost, is not meant its ceasing to be; its sinking, like the body into a senseless state, without life and feeling. In this sense the soul cannot be lost; for it will live for ever. But *how*

will it live? This is the main question. Will it be happy or miserable? Will it live in bliss or in pain? It may be happy. It may live in bliss. It may dwell for ever in the presence, the favour, and the service of GOD. It may enjoy a glorious eternity in heaven. But on the other hand, it *may* fail of all this. Instead of being happy, it *may* be miserable. Instead of living in bliss, it *may* live in pain. Instead of dwelling for ever in the presence, the favour, and the service of GOD, it *may* be driven from his presence, be cast out of his favour, and be counted unworthy of his service. Instead of enjoying a glorious eternity in heaven, it *may* be condemned to suffer everlasting torments in hell. And this is what is meant by the soul's being lost; its being lost to every good, and desirable, and valuable purpose; its being lost to peace, and hope, and happiness: its being plunged into an endless state of grief, despair, and misery.

Judge then, my brethren, what is the worth of the soul, and then say, Is worldly happiness well bought at such a price as this? Do these things bear any proportion to each other in value? Will worldly happiness make any amends for the loss of the soul? Surely this one consideration —

that, "the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are eternal*;" that all worldly happiness must come to an end, but that the loss of the soul will be followed with never-ending misery—is of itself sufficient to decide the question. This one consideration proves, beyond all doubt, the truth which I am explaining. If a man, for the sake of enjoying one day's happiness, would willingly engage to suffer pain and torture for fifty years, should we not at once condemn his folly? What then must we say to the folly of that man, who, for the sake of being happy while he lives, should consent to be miserable for ever when he dies; who, for the sake of obtaining a short, temporal, perishable enjoyment, should engage to suffer eternal torment?—Would not such a man make a most foolish bargain?—Would he not in the end bitterly lament what he had done? Let us suppose him to have gained, were it possible, the *whole* world; to have had as large a share of worldly honour, wealth, and pleasure as any man ever yet had or could have. Let us suppose him to have been as great, and wise, and rich as Solomon himself: to have possessed all the means of worldly enjoyment which he possessed: to have lived in

* 2 Cor. iv. 18.

the full possession of them for the greatest number of years, which any child of Adam has ever lived; yet what will all this profit him when he shall die, and shall "lift up his eyes in hell, being in torments?" Ask him what he then thinks of his bargain, and of his wisdom in making it. Ask him, whether his past pleasures make up for his present sufferings? Whether in gaining the world and losing his soul he has done well for himself? Whether in casting up the whole account, in balancing his gains against his losses, he is satisfied with what he has done? What answer will he make to these enquiries? He will surely say, 'Ah! no. 'I have miserably deceived myself. I have 'made a most foolish bargain. I gained in-'deed the world; but what does the world 'now profit me? What am I the better 'for all I had, and all I enjoyed on earth? 'Nothing of my pleasures or my possessions 'now remains. Not even a drop of water is 'left to cool my tongue. Had I ten thou-'sand thousand worlds, how readily would I 'give them all that I might be delivered 'from this place of torment. I have caught 'at a shadow, but have let go the substance. 'I thought only of time.—I forgot eternity. 'O that I had been wise; that I had under-

'stood this; that I had considered my latter 'end!'

My brethren, if you feel the force and justice of this reasoning, let me remind you how greatly you yourselves are concerned in it. The truth which I have been proving concerns you all. You have every one of you an immortal soul. You have within you that precious, invaluable treasure which is of more worth than ten thousand worlds. It is committed to your keeping; and your own eternal happiness or misery depends on the care you take of it. If you lose it, far better would it have been for you never to have been born. Beware, then, lest you make the foolish bargain described in the text. Beware, lest you are guilty of the folly there set forth, and sell your soul for this world's gain.

Perhaps you judge the caution to be needless. You think that there is no danger of your acting so unwise a part. You feel assured that if the same proposal, which was made to our blessed Lord, should be made to you, you, like him, would instantly reject it; that you would not deliberately sell your soul for "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them."* And I believe that you would not. I be-

* Matthew, iv. 8.

lieve you would start with horror from such an offer. But at the same time you may be ignorantly doing the very thing which you profess to abhor. You may be bartering away your soul for some earthly good, and still be unconscious that you are committing this folly. Remember that the salvation of the soul is a work in which great pains, and care, and diligence, are wanted. You cannot save your soul without resisting the devil, for the devil is the great enemy of the soul. You cannot save your soul without renouncing this wicked world, with all its pomps and vanities; for the world, if loved and followed, will ensnare and ruin the soul. You cannot save your soul without abstaining from fleshly lusts: for "fleshly lusts war against the soul." * Now, if for the sake of some earthly good you are neglecting to do any of these things; if from the love of present gain, or ease, or pleasure, you are giving place to the devil, or are walking after the course of this world, or are indulging fleshly lusts, you are virtually selling your soul. You are preferring present gain, or ease, or pleasure, to eternal happiness. You are, in fact, willingly consenting for the sake of these things here to be miserable hereafter. It

* 1 Peter, ii. 11.

matters not *what* it is that you are taking in exchange for your soul. Whether it be much or little, makes no alteration in the case. You may be selling your soul as certainly for a small as for a large portion of the world. And be assured, that you most certainly *are* selling it, if in your endeavours to gain even this small portion, you are neglecting "the one thing needful." Your soul must be your first, your great concern. It claims, it deserves to be so. If it be not, that thing, be it what it may, which you prefer before the soul, is the price for which you are selling it. The more worthless things may be, (if, indeed, the worthless things of time and sense can admit of a comparison with each other,) the greater is your folly, and the worse your bargain.

Be assured, also, if this be the case, that you will one day bitterly repent what you are doing. At present you may not be sensible of your folly. The god of this world may have blinded your eyes, that you see not. The things of the world appear of so much value that you can look at nothing else. But it will not be always thus. A day is coming when the dream will end, when the veil will be torn from your eyes, and the world will be seen in its true light:

when all its profits and all its pleasures will be seen to be lighter than vanity, and more worthless than chaff; while the importance of the soul and of eternity will rush upon the mind with a clearness and a force of which you now have not the slightest notion. And what at that time will be your feelings? — When you are lying on the bed of death; when you are about to close your eyes for ever on this world; when the whole world, if you have gained it all, cannot for a moment stay the parting breath — what will be your feelings? How deeply will your heart be torn with grief, remorse and terror? How bitterly will you lament and condemn your folly! What will you not be ready to give that you might but live over again and provide for eternity? Many most awful and distressing scenes of this kind are the ministers of the Gospel forced to witness. Many instances do they see of persons who never discover the value of their soul, till, as there is every reason to fear, the discovery is too late; of persons, who, like Esau, having profanely sold their birthright for some worldly trifle, when, like him, they "would afterward inherit the blessing," find, as he found, "no place of repentance." * And still what greater

* Hebrews, xii. 17.

numbers are there, we may tremble to think, who even go out of the world without making this discovery! who, sunk into a deadly sleep, think not of eternity till they awake in the flames of hell, and find their souls lost for ever.

God forbid, my brethren, that this should be your miserable case! O that you would see these things in this your day, as you must see them in the day of visitation! Remember, that whatever the world, and your soul, and eternity, will appear to you then, such they really are now. If to have gained the whole world, but to have lost your soul, will then appear to be a most miserable bargain, be assured that it is a most miserable bargain now. Make not this bargain for yourselves. Be wise in time. Prepare for death and judgement. Attend to the things which belong unto your peace, your everlasting peace, before they are hidden from your eyes.

SERMON II.

THE UNFRUITFULNESS AND MISERY OF SIN.

ROMANS, vi. 21.

What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.

ONE of the surest means by which Satan keeps men under his power, is by keeping them in ignorance of their state. Did they once see in what a vile, a shameful, a ruinous service they were engaged, they would quickly leave it. Did they once see what sin really is, they would speedily flee from it. In this view the text is particularly useful: for it sets sin before us in its true colours, and shows us what it is, when stript of every covering.

St. Paul is speaking to persons, who, having once been the servants of sin, had now left that service, and were become the

servants of God: and he puts to them this serious question: "What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death." At the time when you lived in your former sinful courses, what real comfort, satisfaction, or happiness, did you find in them? Did they yield you any true profit? The manner in which the Apostle puts the question, plainly shows his meaning.—He knew that they had found nothing of this kind. They must be ready to own, that sin, far from having been profitable to them, had brought with it disappointment and vexation; had been followed with shame and grief; and had exposed their souls to the greatest danger:

In discoursing on these words, I shall set before you the three things which are here stated concerning sin.

I. That it yields no present fruit.
II. That it is followed by shame.
III. That it ends in death.

I. Sin yields no present fruit; that is, nothing which deserves the name of fruit. It may furnish indeed some short gratification, some momentary pleasure. But this is not *fruit*. It does not pay a man for the trouble and danger into which

it brings him. Nothing but peace with GOD, and an approving conscience, can really deserve the name of fruit; and sin, so far from producing these things, totally destroys them. Sin indeed makes large promises, tempts men with flattering offers, and tells them what great things it will do for them: in the same manner as the devil tempted our LORD to worship him, by offering to him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. But as Satan then promised to give what was not in his power to bestow; so it is with sin. It cannot fulfil its promises, or make good its words. It only deceives, and disappoints those who listen to its offers. They may amuse themselves with the expectation of great advantages. They may hope to reap much fruit —— But they are "sowing to the flesh," and must "reap corruption." —— Sinners do not find in sin even that present enjoyment which they had hoped to find. Look at our first parent, Eve. What fruit had she from her sin? She had fancied that there would be some great and singular pleasure in eating of the forbidden tree. She had persuaded herself, that she should gain some special advantages by this act of disobedience; that it would make her wise,

and great, and happy, like God himself. But were these expectations answered? Did she find all the good which she had hoped for from her sin? Far otherwise; she found herself wretchedly deceived. She was become indeed wiser than she had been before; but the wisdom which she had gained, was not such as to add to her comfort and enjoyment. She knew good from evil; for she had lost the good, and had found the evil. Instead of being happy, she was become miserable. Instead of being like God, she had lost his likeness; and was become like the devil, whose counsel she had followed. Instead of being filled with peace, and joy, and hope in GOD, as she had before been, she was now torn with remorse, and guilt, and terror. This was the fruit of her sin.

Take another example. Look at Judas, who sold his Master. What fruit had he in his transgression? He doubtless thought that the thirty pieces of silver would add greatly to his happiness, and would yield him much present enjoyment. In the hope of the benefits, which he should procure from his sin, he "ran greedily after the reward," and betrayed the innocent blood. Was his hope fulfilled? — We know that it was not. No sooner was the sin committed, than he

saw it in its true light. The advantages which he had promised to himself, all fled away. He was overwhelmed with horror and despair.

But we need not go so far back for examples to our purpose. We may have recourse to living instances. My brethren, I would refer this matter to yourselves, and make you judges in the case before us. What *fruit* have you had in the ways of sin? To such of you, as being convinced of the evil of these ways, through grace have left them, and turned into other paths, to such I may confidently appeal. You, I feel assured, will readily confess, that you found no fruit in the ways of sin; that so long as you continued the servants of sin, you were strangers to true enjoyment: and that peace and happiness are only to be found in the service and the ways of God. But *you* are not the only witnesses to this truth. I would appeal to others also: to those who are still living in the ways of sin, and yielding themselves servants to unrighteousness. I would ask them, whether they find true happiness in their sinful courses? I would put the question in the text to their consciences, and say to each of them, "What fruit hast thou even now in these things?"

Come thou, O drunkard, who makest it a practice, whenever a convenient opportunity may offer, to indulge thy sensual appetite, and to sink the man into the beast, stand forth, and in the face of this congregation, say whether thou findest the ways of drunkenness to be ways of pleasantness and peace? Do they yield thee enjoyment sufficient to make amends for the remorse and sorrow which attend them? Say, in the midst of thy guilty pleasures, dost thou not often feel a pang of conscience, a secret misgiving, a horrid foreboding, which embitters all thy seeming joy? And in the moments of sober recollection, what are thy feelings? Art thou not wounded with the thoughts of thy wretched life? Art thou not stung with anguish at the prospect of thy health destroyed, thy property injured, thy family ruined, through thy intemperance? Dost thou not fly many a time to riot and excess, in order to drown thy recollection, and silence thy conscience? We know, whether thou wilt own it or not, that all this is the case. We know that thou canst not deny, 'My ways are not those of happiness.'

Can the envious, discontented, repining man, speak better of the paths in which he

walks? Does he find them "paths of pleasantness and peace?"

Will the passionate, revengeful, malignant character come forward and tell us, that *he* is happy? Or if he did tell us so, could we believe him?

Let me turn to the slave of lust; or to the profane, ungodly scoffer; to the hardened, careless sinner; or to him, who secretly wrongs his neighbour, and by fraud or theft, strives to enrich himself. Let me separately ask each one of these, 'What fruit hast thou in these things?' He will surely answer, 'Peace is not with me.'

I would appeal to another man, to the idolater, — not him who worships gods of wood and stone, — but him who sets up his idols in his heart, and makes the world his god; who places his whole affections on the things of this life; has his treasure on earth; and labours only for the meat which perisheth. What fruit hast thou in these things? Do they yield thee true enjoyment? Do they not bring care and sorrow? Do they not frequently occasion disappointment and vexation? How often art thou unable to get the thing thou wantest? How constantly, when gotten, does it fall short of thy wishes, and leave thee, as it found thee, dissatisfied, and still wanting something

more? Restless and uneasy, thou art not, thou canst not be happy.

Thus we may feel confident, that there is not one among us, whose experience will not help to confirm the truth which we are considering; not one, whose conscience, if fairly suffered to speak, would not testify, that sin yields no present fruit. I observe,

II. That sin is followed by shame.

"What fruit had ye then in those things *whereof ye are now ashamed?*" Shame is that confusion of mind, which arises from a consciousness of guilt. While our first parents were free from sin, they knew not shame. But no sooner had they broken the divine commandment, and had brought guilt upon their souls, than they were ashamed. Conscious of what they had done, fearing detection, and not able to face the ALMIGHTY, they hid themselves among the trees of the garden. And is not such the case with every sin? Will it not sooner or later bring shame as its certain follower? Undoubtedly it will. For a time, indeed, men may sin without feeling shame. They may even glory in their shame. They may be proud, and boast of that which ought to be their shame. But it will not be always thus. A day is coming, when every thing,

even "every hidden thing of darkness," will be brought to light; when sin will be seen by all in its true colours. In that day how great will be the consternation of the wicked! they "will awake to shame and everlasting contempt." * How will they be ashamed at the discovery of those sins, which they were not afraid to commit! When they see what sin is, how odious, how vile it is, with what unspeakable confusion will they be overwhelmed! they will be unable to look their Judge in the face. Conscious guilt will stop their mouths. They will call on the rocks and mountains to cover them. — But farther, even where sin is repented of and forsaken, it is still followed by shame. These things cannot be parted from each other. The persons spoken of in the text, though no longer the servants of sin, are represented as still *ashamed* of their former evil ways. Thus the penitent Ephraim is described as "*ashamed*, yea, even *confounded*, because he did bear the reproach of his youth." † When the sinner indeed is brought to see something of the number and greatness of his sins; that they are utterly without excuse; that they have been committed against a good and holy God, who has been loading him with benefits and

* Daniel, xii. 2. † Jeremiah, xxxi. 19.

mercies; can he be otherwise than *ashamed* at the recollection of his folly and guilt? Was not this the case with the prodigal, when, calling to mind his father's love and kindness, and his own base ingratitude, he felt that he was no longer worthy to be called a son? Is not this the state to which the Lord declares that he will bring his people Israel, when they shall "remember their own evil ways, and their doings which were not good, and shall loathe themselves in their own sight for their iniquities;" and shall "be confounded, and shall never open their mouths any more because of their shame, even when he is pacified towards them for all that they have done?" * What do we suppose was the state of Peter's mind, when he saw his guilt in having denied his Master? How great a share must shame have had in the painful feelings of his soul, when "he went out and wept bitterly?" † So constantly is sin followed by shame.

III. Sin ends in death.

"What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? *For the end of those things is death.*" St. James gives the same account of the matter. "When lust has conceived, it bringeth forth sin,

* Jeremiah, xxxi. 19. Ezekiel, xvi. 63.; xxxvi. 31.
† Matthew, xxvi. 75.

and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."* Sin is the parent of death. It bringeth it forth as naturally as the parent bringeth forth its young. St. Paul, in a verse or two after the text, puts the same truth in another light. He calls death "*the wages of sin:*" that recompense which sin earns, and which it will undoubtedly receive. Thus death was solemnly denounced on our first parents, as the certain consequence of sin. When God charged them not to eat of the tree of knowledge, he assured them that death would follow disobedience: "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."† And what is death? It is a word of the most aweful meaning. When spoken of the body, it means its separation from the soul, which is its life, and its returning to the dust, whence it was taken. But death, when spoken of the soul, as it is in the text, and in the other places mentioned above, (for "the soul that sinneth, it shall die‡,") means the final separation of the soul from the favour, the presence, and the Spirit of God, which is its life, and the being for ever given up to darkness, torment, and despair. Hence it is called in the Revelation of St. John, "The second death."§

* James, i. 15.
† Genesis, ii. 17.
‡ Ezek. xvii. 14.
§ Rev. xxi. 8.

Hence also it is opposed by St. Paul, in the passage before mentioned, to *eternal life.* "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life."* Thus also in the burial-service of our church, those who perish in their sins, are said *to die eternally:* and we pray *to be delivered from the bitter pains of eternal death.* In short, this is the end of sin, eternal misery in hell. It is the end to which it naturally and necessarily leads. God hath unalterably decreed, that "The wicked shall be turned into hell†:" that the unpardoned sinner shall not escape, but shall go into everlasting punishment.

Such is the view here given of sin. From what has been said, you may have some notion of what it really is. It yields no true enjoyment at present. It brings those who commit it to shame. And, if not repented of, forsaken, and pardoned, it will surely, in the end, destroy their souls for ever. This is sin. Yet this, my brethren, is the thing which so many love, and to which they cleave. This is the master whom they choose, and serve in preference to God; that God, who, if they truly turned to him, instead of rewarding them with shame and death, would make them happy

* Rom. vi. 23. † Psalm xvii.

here, and glorious for ever hereafter. Surely, if you would lay these things to heart, you would not continue the willing servants of sin. Only consider what injury you are doing to yourselves, by serving such a master.

You are depriving yourselves of all the present peace and happiness, which you would certainly find in the ways and service of God. As yet indeed you know nothing of these things by experience; and therefore it is probable, that you rate them far below their real value. Not having ever felt the joys and comforts of religion, you account them to be little. But they are not little. They are great; beyond your conception great. The peace of God — that peace which God gives to his people, and which they only know — is a peace "which passeth all understanding:" a peace which the workers of wickedness can never know: for there is no peace to them. A conscience void of offence, a sense of God's favour and love, a well-grounded hope of eternal glory, are causes of delight and joy, with which all the pleasures of sin are not to be compared. Would the servants of God be so repeatedly said in the Scriptures to be *happy* and *blessed*, if they had not a happiness and a blessedness peculiarly their

own? Could you but be persuaded to make trial of their ways, you would find them to be ways of pleasantness and peace. Could you but be persuaded to forsake the service of sin, you would soon be sensible of the present happiness which you are losing, by obstinately persisting in that service.

Besides, the longer you continue in the ways of sin, the greater unhappiness you are laying up for yourselves hereafter. You have seen, that shame must follow sin. Here or hereafter, either in this world or the next, you must be brought to shame for every sin which you commit. If you should live to repent of your transgressions, and to sorrow for them with a godly sorrow; yet every additional sin which you commit will imbitter that repentance, and make that sorrow deeper. The greater is your gilt, the greater will be your shame and self-reproach, whenever God, in his mercy, may bring you to a penitent feeling of your sins. But if this should never be the case; if the Lord, provoked at your past and present impenitence, should never grant to you repentance unto life; What, in that case, will become of you? What, in that case, are you now doing? You are sealing your own destruction. You are

treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. By every additional sin, you are adding fuel to that fire which will torment your soul for ever. Consider these things. May they work in you a holy resolution to forsake the service of sin, and to choose the service of GOD! Surely you mean to do this at some time. Why delay the doing of it? Why delay to be freed from the bondage of the devil, from the guilt of sin, from the wrath of GOD? Is sin so profitable? Is the state of a sinner so safe, so happy, that any should be loath to leave it? Can you be happy too soon? Too soon be a child of God and an heir of heaven? Too soon be delivered from the danger of dying eternally? Would you gratify and please your worst enemy a little longer, before you quit his service? Would you fix sin a little deeper in your heart, before you try to root it out? Is your life too long? Are you afraid of having too much time, and of beginning the great work of repentance too soon? Believe it, Satan is not idle in destroying your soul, though you are negligent in saving it. Time is not standing still. You, together with it, are hastening fast towards eternity. When a few more days, or weeks, or years, at farthest, shall be past, your time of trial will

be gone; your day of repentance over; your doom for ever fixed. What mean you then by delaying to flee from the wrath to come? "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead!" Do you say, 'We 'will repent to-morrow?' This night your soul may be required of you. "Behold, *now* is the accepted time: behold, *now* is the day of salvation:" While it is called to-day, harden not your heart. Lie not down on your bed this night, till you have begged of God to enable you, to renounce the service of sin, and to yield yourselves servants to righteousness. So "shall you have your fruit here unto holiness, and in the end everlasting life."

SERMON III.

IMPOSSIBILITY OF SERVING GOD AND MAMMON.

MATTHEW, vi. 24.

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.

THERE are few persons who could be brought plainly to say, even in their own hearts, 'We will not serve God.' Most men would be shocked at avowing such a resolution. But there are numbers who act in the spirit of it; who are resolved to serve the world, and, at all events, to have a portion on earth. And what is this, but, in fact, to give up the service of GOD? It is true that they do not professedly intend to give it up. They mean to secure a portion in heaven, as well as a portion on earth. But in attempting this, they are attempting an impossibility. Our Saviour, in the text, strongly condemns the folly of such an

attempt. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve GOD and Mammon." In discoursing on these words let us consider,

I. The Meaning and Truth of the Maxim here laid down.

II. Our Lord's Application of it.

I. The Maxim is this, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other." Now the meaning and truth of this maxim may be clearly seen from a very little consideration. Every one understands what is meant by serving a master. It is spending our time and our talents in his service. It is doing his will and his work, furthering his interests, and obeying his orders. What should we say of the man, who should betray the trust which his master puts in him; who, as soon as his master's back is turned, should neglect his business; or who, whenever his own inclination tempts him, should disobey his master's orders, or sacrifice his master's interests to those of some other person? Should we say of such a man, that he served his master? No. The man who *serves* his master, is one who serves him with faithfulness,

with diligence, with singleness of heart, with a mind ready and willing, and wholly given up to his service. Now, for a man *thus* to serve two masters is utterly impossible. He cannot love them both alike. He cannot be devoted to both of them alike. He must, secretly, at least, prefer the one to the other; and thus, in truth, must belong to the one, and not to the other. So long, indeed, as both those, whom he calls his masters, may travel the same road, or give the same orders, he may *appear* to serve them both. He may follow both; he may obey both; and so may deem himself the servant of both. But when they go different ways, or give different orders; when one of them turns to the right hand, and the other to the left; when one of them commands one thing, and the other gives a directly contrary command; then what will be the case? It will then be seen which of them the man *really* serves. It will then be seen to which of them he *really* belongs. However he may have hitherto hidden his mind from others, or even deceived himself, by calling them both 'master,' yet he can now hide the matter no longer; he must now follow one of them, and forsake the other; he must now obey one

of them and disobey the other: he must now clearly show to which of them, either from interest or from affection, he is bound, and whose service of the two he really prefers. — The Meaning and Truth then of the Maxim in the text are clear. "No man can serve two masters." He may intend to do it. He may try to do it. He may, for a time, seem to do it; and may even think that he does it. But when something happens which brings the matter to a trial, then his real mind is discovered; then it is decidedly seen, however ignorant he may have hitherto been of his own heart, that, in fact, he "hates the one, and loves the other; that he holds to the one, and despises the other."

II. We consider our LORD's Application of this Maxim; "Ye cannot serve GOD and Mammon.

Mammon is a word which signifies *gain*; and it may be understood as meaning honour, riches, pleasures, sensual gratifications, or any thing of a worldly nature, which men account to be gain, and to which they look for happiness. Of this Mammon then our Lord says, "Ye cannot serve *it* and GOD." He does not say, "Ye *ought* not to serve GOD and Mammon." Your duty, your interest forbid you to serve them both. But you cannot serve them both. To attempt

it is to attempt what cannot be done. And *why* cannot it be done? For the very reason which he had stated above: because "no man can serve two masters;" GOD and Mammon are two masters; and therefore no man can serve them both. They are two masters, whose interests directly thwart each other, and whose commands are continually crossing and opposing each other. For example; GOD says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself!"* Mammon says, 'Love thyself best.' — GOD says, "If thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour's hand, ye shall not oppress one another."† Mammon says, 'Make the best bargain in your 'power. Over-reach and defraud one 'other, if you are able. Push your own 'interest, and care not at whose loss or ex-'pense.' — GOD says, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." "Come out from among them, and be ye separate." "Be not conformed to this world."‡ Mammon says, 'Do as others do. Avoid being 'singular. Comply with the customs and 'practices of the world.' —— Now is it possible, while God and Mammon give such different orders, that we can serve them both? Is it possible, that we can love the

* Matt. xxii. 39. † Lev. xxv. 14.
‡ Lev. xxiii. 2. 2 Cor. vi. 17. Rom. xii. 2.

one, without hating the other; that we can hold to the one, without despising the other? Nay; the very pleas which men continually urge in defence of their sins, show this to be the case. How often do we hear persons trying to excuse their transgressions of God's law on the ground that their worldly affairs make such transgressions necessary? What is the language of one? When required to leave off such or such a practice, which the law of God clearly condemns, he answers, 'All persons 'in my circumstances follow this practice. 'It is necessary to the successful carrying 'on of my business. If I were to leave 'it off, I should suffer a great loss. My 'profits would be less. Others, who are 'not so scrupulous, would get the start of 'me. Surely these reasons are sufficient 'to justify my conduct. I cannot be 'expected so far to injure myself as to 'give up the practice in question.' What is the language of another? He is admonished to keep holy the Sabbath-day. He is told that many things, in which on that day he employs himself or his servants, are strictly forbidden by the holy law of God. 'But such employments,' he cries, 'are very 'gainful to me. Several of these things, if 'done on another day, would greatly inter-'rupt the regular business of the week. To

'do them on a Sunday is a considerable 'saving of time. It is a piece of good 'management, without which I should not 'keep pace with my neighbours. To ob- 'serve the Sabbath in the manner enjoined 'would be so great a hinderance to me, that I 'may surely hope to be excused for breaking 'the command.'—Listen to a third. He is exhorted to be bountiful to the poor: to communicate freely to those that are in want. He is shown that this merciful and liberal conduct is strongly prescribed by the divine law. What does he say? 'I must 'think first of myself, and of my own family. 'I have worked hard for what I have. It is 'not to be supposed that I should readily 'give it away. Besides, I have a certain ob- 'ject in view, a possession to buy, an im- 'provement to make, a child to set up in 'business, for which I want to raise a parti- 'cular sum. In this case it is impossible that 'I can part with my money to others. Such 'an unreasonable act can never be required 'of me.' Now what does this language, in these several instances, prove? It proves that GOD and Mammon are two masters, who require of their servants contrary things; two masters, therefore, whom no man can serve. The persons who use this language, in fact, by using it, confess as much; while, by breaking GOD's command,

whenever it happens to cross their worldly interest, they clearly show what master they serve. They clearly show, whatever they may say to the contrary, or however in some things they may seem to do otherwise, that they are devoted to the service, not of GOD, but of Mammon. Let us remember, that if God be our master, we must follow him fully. He demands the heart. He will allow of no reserves. He will not permit us to choose which of his laws we shall break, and which obey; to keep one of his precepts, and to break another. He requires us to have respect unto all his commandments. He will not admit of a rival in our affections; nor suffer any idol to share with him that love which is due to him alone. He has expressly said, "that if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him;" that "the friendship of the world is enmity with GOD:" and that, therefore, "whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of GOD."*

This may be called a hard saying. Some at least may be ready to ask, 'What then 'are we to do? Are we to be idle and slothful? Are we to neglect our business, and 'to let our families come to ruin? Are we 'to bring ourselves to poverty, till we be-

* 1 John, ii. 15. James, iv. 4.

'come a burden to others? Does religion re-
'quire these things of us?' No, my brethren. Religion requires of you none of these things. On the contrary, it forbids you to be idle: it commands you to be industrious, to follow your worldly business with diligence and activity. It expressly declares, that "if any will not work, neither should he eat;" that "if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."* But is there no difference between industriously following your worldly business, and making the world your master, your idol, your god?" Yes: there is a very wide difference between these things. While religion permits, nay, commands you to follow with diligence your worldly calling, it also commands you to serve GOD, and to make him your master. It tells you, that while you are diligently following your worldly calling, you must yet be faithfully serving GOD, "not slothful in business," but at the same time, "fervent in spirit, serving the LORD."† Are you unable to understand how this can be done? I will endeavour to show you:

1. You must follow your worldly business from *right motives*. You must be di-

* 2 Thess. iii. 10. 1 Tim. v. 8. † Rom. xii. 11.

ligent; not merely because diligence is the road to wealth; but because it is your *duty* to be so. You must labour in your calling for conscience-sake, from a desire of doing the will of GOD in that station of life in which he has placed you.

2. You must follow your worldly business by *right rules.* You must be governed, not by the corrupt maxims and bad examples of the world, not by what may be called the laws or customs of trade, but by the precepts of GOD's law. What he forbids you to do you must leave undone. What he tells you to do you must do. You must patiently submit to the losses which this conduct may occasion. You must suffer your less scrupulous neighbour to get a little richer than yourself, without envy and repining.

3. You must use your worldly gain in a *right manner;* not in gratifying your own lusts, your pride, your covetousness, or your sensuality; but to the glory of GOD, and to the good of your fellow-creatures; in acts of kindness and charity; in liberally communicating to others, in freely bestowing what God has given to you, in such a way as is most pleasing and honourable to him.

In short, the world must not be your

treasure, and you must not follow or use it, as if it was. In every thing you must sacrifice your worldly interest to the will and the law of GOD. You must have your treasure in heaven, and seek *first* those things which are above. This is what religion demands of you. It will be satisfied with nothing less than this. At the same time it will enable you to do all this; if you earnestly desire it, and humbly and constantly pray for grace and strength to do it.

It now only remains, my brethren, that I apply this subject to yourselves. You cannot serve GOD and Mammon. One of them you must serve. Both, you cannot serve. The question is, 'which will you 'serve?' Will you be the servant of GOD, or the servant of the world? Before you decide, consider well the ground on which each claims your service. There are but two things which can weigh with a man in the choice of a master, *interest* or *gratitude*. If he prefer one master to another, it must be, either because he believes that one *can do* more for him than the other; or because he feels that one *has done* more for him than the other. Now, on both these grounds, GOD most decidedly claims your services above the world. Whether you would consult your interest, or would avoid

the charge of ingratitude, you cannot but choose God for your master. Let me reason this matter with you.

1. God can do more for you than Mammon can do. He will reward your services with higher and better wages. You are not sure, that with all your toil and foresight, you shall acquire that wordly gain which you are now so diligently seeking. A thousand things may disappoint your hopes. But even, if acquired, it cannot secure to you happiness. It cannot free you from pain, or sickness, or sorrow. It cannot prevent you from feeling the loss of friends, the infirmities of age, and the fears of death. It cannot silence the voice of conscience, and give you peace at the last. And what will the world do for you at the Day of Judgement? Could you gain the whole world, what, in that aweful day, would it profit you? Will Mammon turn aside the sword of vengeance, deliver you from the sentence of the Judge, or save you from the fire of hell? No. It will leave you comfortless and defenceless. Nothing of what you have here possessed will then remain. All which you will have in that day, is the recollection of what you have been, and the misery, the remorse, and the shame, which that recollection will bring with it. These

will be the wages, the rewards, with which Mammon will repay your services. But will such be the consequence of having chosen God for your master? will He thus repay your services? Far otherwise will be the case. Be faithful to Him, and you shall find the blessedness of serving Him. "His service is perfect freedom." Even in this life you shall be free from those tormenting fears and anxious cares, which the servants of Mammon undergo. You shall have a supply of such worldly things as are good and needful for you. You shall have peace with God and in your conscience. You shall enjoy the delight of communion with him in prayer, the sense of his love and favour shed abroad in your hearts, and the cheering hope of a glorious immortality.—Nor will the blessedness of serving God end with the present life. Nay, it will then be immensely increased. Then the advantage of having chosen Him for our portion will indeed appear. How joyfully will these words sound in the ears of every one who has served God instead of Mammon, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" And when he *has* entered there, how vast will be his happiness, how inconceivable his bliss! Then in truth will he be

convinced, that man does not "serve GOD for nought." Would, my brethren, that you may now be convinced of the same thing!' Surely you cannot but see, that if you would most certainly serve and secure your own *interest*, you must choose GOD for your master. But farther,

2. GOD claims your service on the ground not only of what he *can do*, but of what he *has done* for you. In this respect, his claim to your obedience is still more clear and strong. By every tie of gratitude you are bound to serve GOD. He made you what you are. Your body is the work of his hands. He breathed into you the breath of life. He gave to you an immortal soul. He has preserved you ever since you were born. The food by which you have been supported; the raiment by which you have been clothed; the friends who have assisted you; the health which you have enjoyed, have been all his gifts. They have been mercies, daily and hourly bestowed on you. Surely you are powerfully called on to devote to the service of GOD all those faculties of soul and body, which, in fact, are not your own, but his. There are, however, other, and still higher grounds, on which he claims your services. He has not only created, not only preserved you, but

he has also *redeemed* you. Who can conceive how vast a mercy is expressed by the word *Redemption!* Call to mind your state as sinners; the guilt and misery which you have brought upon yourselves. Recollect that in this wretched state, GOD looks on you with pity, and wishes not your death: that, "for the great love wherewith he loveth you," he has planned a way for your salvation. To this end, he has not withheld from you his Son, his only Son, but has given him up for you, has given him up to death, even the death of the cross; that thus, by the ransom of his blood, he might redeem you from eternal misery, and open to you the kingdom of heaven. Nay, that nothing might be wanting to complete your salvation, or to show forth the riches of his grace, to the unspeakable gift of his Son he has added also the gift of his Spirit, to dwell in you, to be your Sanctifier, your Comforter, and your never-failing Friend. Hath GOD done all this for you, and does he not justly claim your services? Is it not the most base ingratitude to refuse to serve Him, who has thus bought you with his own blood, who has ransomed you at such a price? What claim can the world have on you equal to such a claim as this? What has Mammon done to deserve your services?

Instead of furthering your happiness, it has only brought on you trouble and sorrow, sin and shame. Instead of doing any thing to save you from perishing, it has done all in its power to ruin and destroy your soul. Far, therefore, from being entitled to your favour, it deserves your just abhorrence.— "Choose you, then, this day, whom ye will serve." Life and death are set before you. May GOD give you grace to choose that better part, which never shall be taken away from you! May every one of you be enabled from the heart to say, "As for me, I will serve the Lord."

SERMON IV.

MORTIFICATION OF SIN A REASONABLE DUTY.

MARK, ix. 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48.

If thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell; into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out; it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

THE service which religion requires is a reasonable service. It demands of us nothing but what our own reason, if suffered fairly to judge, must approve: nothing, but what is for our good, and tends to increase our happiness. If some of GOD's commandments seem to us to be grievous, they only *seem*,

they are not really so. If they bid us do any thing which is now unpleasant to our feelings, it is only to save us in the end from something which it will be far worse to bear.

There is in the text a striking instance of the truth of this remark. Our SAVIOUR was enforcing a very painful duty: one which he knew that men would be most unwilling to perform. And *how* did he enforce it? By showing that it is a *profitable* duty. It is one which we cannot neglect, without manifest injury to ourselves. Painful as it may be, it will be our interest and happiness to perform it. We surely cannot but listen with seriousness and attention to a command, which comes thus recommended to our notice.

In discoursing on it, I shall set before you,

I. The Duty here enjoined.

II. The Argument by which it is enforced.

I. The Duty here enjoined is thus described in the text. "If thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut it off; if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out." So that, in explaining the duty, it will be necessary to show what is the case supposed: what is the state of the member here spoken off: when the hand or the foot may be said to *offend*. To offend, in the language of Scripture, frequently means to put any thing in the way of a per-

son, which may cause him to fall or stumble. Hence, by a common figure of speech, whatever may prove a snare or temptation to any one, whatever may be the occasion of drawing him into sin, is said to offend him. Thus St. Paul uses the word, when he says, "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is *offended*, or is made weak."* Thus CHRIST also used the word, when he said to the disciples of John the Baptist, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be *offended* in me;" and again, to his own disciple Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an *offence* unto me."† The Apostle, by urging JESUS to avoid the cross, was a snare and temptation to him. And in this sense the word is used in the text. The member is said to *offend*, when it proves an occasion of sin. The case supposed is this: that the hand, or the foot, or the eye, become a snare and temptation to us; that they are a continual occasion of our committing sin, and bringing guilt upon our souls. Now, in this case, what is to be done? What is the duty required of us? We must part with the offending member. However painful the operation, however

* Rom. xii. 21. † Matthew, xi. 6. — xvi. 23.

severe the loss may be, we must undergo the pain, we must submit to the loss. There is no choice left to us in the matter. We must not, consult our feeling. We must "not confer with flesh and blood." One thing only is to be done. Cut off the hand or foot. Pluck out the eye. — Such is the duty here described. But how then are we to understand this duty? Are we to suppose that our LORD meant us to take it in its plain literal meaning? Did he intend, that we should really cut off our hand or foot, and pluck out our eye? Doubtless he designed in this particular instance to lay down a general rule. He designed to shew us *how* we are required to act in every case like that which he had stated. Every thing which may prove a stumbling-block in our way must be treated as the offending member is to be treated. Be it what it may, be it something as useful as a hand, as serviceable as a foot, as dear and precious as an eye; be it something, a separation from which will be as painful as a separation from a part of our body; yet if it be a snare and temptation to us, if it be an occasion of sin, it must be parted with. There is no other course to be followed. Self must be denied. The fleshly lust must be crucified. The evil habit must

be rooted out. The unlawful gain must be given up. The beloved idol must be renounced. In short, the duty here enjoined is the Mortification of sin. Now, that this is a very painful and difficult duty cannot be denied. Our Lord himself knew that it would be so. The way in which he describes the duty shows us what he thought of the pain and difficulty attending it. He would not have compared it to the cutting off of a hand or foot, or to the plucking out of an eye, if he had not known that a compliance with his command would be a very severe operation. He does not however on this account withhold the command. Painful as the duty is, he still enforces the discharge of it. Let us then see,

II. The Argument by which he enforces it.

His argument is shortly this; that it is *better* for us to do what he enjoins. And why better? Because not to do it will certainly bring on us greater evils hereafter. And it is better to suffer a present evil, however great, than by avoiding it to incur a greater evil in the end. It is thus that men reason and act in common things. They will endure present loss in the hope of future gain! They will sow with toil now, in the prospect of reaping at some distant time. They will often submit to much self-

denial in order to amend their health. They will sometimes consent even to lose a limb, that they may save their life. Now it is thus that our SAVIOUR wishes us to reason and act in the case before us. He would lead us to mortify sin on the grounds, that though it be a very painful work, yet *not* to mortify it will in the end be followed with consequences far worse. This is his argument. To feel the force of it, we must see what these consequences are. He states them to be two.

1. We shall be shut out from heaven. When our SAVIOUR says, that it is "better to enter into life maimed or halt, or having one eye," he clearly means it to be understood, that without suffering these losses at present, we shall never enter there. In other words he declares, that the Mortification of sin, which he here enjoins, is absolutely necessary, in order to our being received into heaven. Without mortifying sin now we can never be admitted there. And is not this a truth which the whole Bible confirms? There is not any one point more plainly laid down in Scripture than this, that unmortified sin will certainly shut a man out of heaven. Consider what is the character of those who are represented as going to heaven. They are "the pure in heart."

They are those who "sow to the spirit" and "have their fruit unto holiness." They are such as "take up their cross daily:" as "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts;" as put "off concerning their former conversation the old man." Heaven is said to be the inheritance of *the Saints*, "an inheritance among them which are sanctified."* It is expressly said, that "to be spiritually minded is life;" and that "if we mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live."† Surely these texts clearly prove, that mortification of sin is a necessary part of the character of those who enter into heaven. Attend then to the following passages, which in still plainer language speak the same truth. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of GOD? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of GOD."‡ "This ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of CHRIST, and of GOD."§

"They that do the works of the flesh shall not inherit the kingdom of God."‖ Into

* Col. i. 12.— Acts, xxvi. 18. † Rom. viii. 6. 13.
‡ 1 Cor. vi. 9. § Ephes. v. 5. ‖ Gal. v. 21.

the new Jerusalem "there shall in nowise enter any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie."* "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."† There can be no need of adding more on this subject. These texts speak fully to the point. What in fact is it that makes the gate into life straight, and the way that leadeth to it narrow, but the necessity of practising that very self-denial, that mortification of sin, which is here enjoined, in order to our entering into life? Without practising these things, the way can never be found by us; the gate must ever be shut against us.

2. Another consequence of disobeying the command in the text will be this, that we shall be cast into hell. When our Lord says, that it is better to enter into life maimed or halt, or with one eye, than having two hands, two feet, or two eyes, to be cast into the fire that never will be quenched, he plainly teaches, that such must be the end of all who refuse to make the sacrifices required of them. If they will not deny themselves, and mortify their lusts, they must be cast into hell. And is not this also a truth which the whole Bible confirms? Where in fact do we hear of

* Rev. xxi. 27. † Hebrews, xii. 14.

any middle place between heaven and hell? It is constantly said in Scripture that all men must go to the one or the other of these places. There are but two ways, the way of life and the way of destruction: and consequently there are but two ends to which they lead. In the aweful representation of the day of judgement, in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, our LORD mentions but two classes, into which all men are divided, the goats and the sheep; and but two states into which they go, "everlasting punishment," and "life eternal." Those who sit not down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, are described as being cast into outer darkness. Those who are "not counted worthy of the kingdom of GOD," "will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."* These passages prove to us, that such as are shut out from heaven will be cast into hell: and this, therefore, must be the end of those who obey not the command in the text. But there are still other passages, which bear more directly on this point. "To be carnally minded is death."† "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." "They that

* 2 Thess. i. 9. † Rom. vii. 6. 13.

sow to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption."* "The fearful and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."† "The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."‡

Such then will be the consequences of disobeying the command in the text.

We shall be shut out from heaven. We shall be cast into hell. Surely these consequences will be far more dreadful than any which will arise from obeying the command. Admit, that to mortify sin will expose us to present loss and pain; yet the loss of heaven will be greater; the pains of hell will be worse.

Consider what it is to be shut out from heaven. Heaven is that place of blessedness which God has prepared for them that love him. Glorious things are spoken of it, such as, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,

* Gal. vi. 8. † Rev. xxii. 8.
‡ Matt. xiii. 41, 42.

neither have entered into the heart of man." Little indeed can we at present know of the happiness of heaven: but yet enough is said of it in Scripture to fill us with the highest ideas of its greatness and excellence. We are told of the place itself, that "it hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of the LORD doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."* We are told of those who gain an entrance there, that they "shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more;" that "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."† But especially we are told, that the happiness of heaven will be without end. It is "*everlasting life.*" It is "*eternal glory.*" It is "*an incorruptible* inheritance:" "a kingdom *which cannot be moved.*" What then will it be to be shut out from heaven! To see others admitted to this blessed and glorious place, while we are refused an entrance into it: to see others enjoying its unspeakable happiness, while we are for ever cut off from it: how agonising will be the sight: how dreadful will be the anguish of beholding it! What grief

* Rev. xxi. 23. † Rev. vii. 16.—xxi. 4.

and horror will tear the soul on thinking what it has lost!

Consider further what it is to be cast into hell. This is a subject on which the ministers of the gospel have no pleasure in speaking. They are loath to begin, and unwilling to dwell on it. But they must be faithful to their office. "Knowing the terrors of the LORD," they must not hide them; nor "shun to declare all the counsel of GOD." They must not keep back from their hearers, through any mistaken fear of offending them, what the Scriptures make known of hell, that fearful place of torment, which the Almighty in his righteous judgement has prepared for the punishment of his incorrigible enemies. It is a word, indeed, however lightly used by thoughtless men, of most aweful meaning. It describes that state of wrath, that pit of destruction, that outer darkness, where is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Of the torments of hell, the Bible gives no particular and exact description: nor is it probable that at present we could conceive or apprehend them. Enough, however, is said to convince us that they are very dreadful! The most frightful images are used to represent them. In the text itself we meet with such a view of them, as may

well strike terror into our inmost soul. Three times in this passage does Jesus Christ himself set them forth under the ideas of a *gnawing worm*, and a *burning fire*: ideas, than which we can conceive none to be more terrible; for they imply at once both the inward agonies of remorse and despair; and the outward agonies of pain and torture. Besides, let us remember, that the sufferings of hell, like the joys of heaven, are without end. The worm is the worm that "*never dieth.*" The fire is the fire that will be "*never quenched.*" What then will it be to be cast into hell! To endure unutterable torments both in body and soul, and that for ever! To dwell with everlasting burnings! To have no rest day nor night! How do these considerations give weight to the argument in the text! Can we think of all these things, and not feel the force of our Lord's reasoning! Is it not *better* now to cut off a hand, or pluck out an eye, to mortify sin, and deny the flesh, rather than be shut out from heaven, and to be cast into hell? Is it not better to suffer any losses, and make any sacrifices here, than to lose eternal life, and be plunged into everlasting misery hereafter? Are we not in our judgements convinced, that the

duty enjoined in the text is a *reasonable* duty?

This, my brethren, was the conviction to which, on beginning the subject, I wished to bring you. If I have so far gained my point: if I have led you to see, that the duty enjoined in the text, though it be hard and painful, is yet a necessary duty; one, which your own judgement cannot but approve: one, which your own interest requires you to perform; it now only remains, that I endeavour to stir you up to the discharge of it. To approve the command is not enough, you must obey it. Nor think to get rid of the conviction to which you are brought, by supposing that the duty is one which belongs to others, and not to yourself. It belongs to all, and to you among the rest. The case supposed is not one which seldom happens, and which concerns only few persons. Every person has naturally some member which offends him: some sin, which "most easily besets him:" some evil propensity, to which he is most readily inclined: some lusts of the flesh, by which he is most strongly tempted. Here then must the work of mortification begin. To the root of this tree must the axe be decidedly laid. Examine, therefore

yourselves. Look each of you into your own heart and life, into your tempers, your employments, and your circumstances, and see whether, in all, or in any of these, there be not yet remaining some part of "the old man," which the command in the text requires you to put off: whether there be not yet some hand, or foot, or eye, which still *offends* you. Is there any evil passion which you have been in the habit of indulging, either pride, or anger, or lust, or malice, or covetousness? Is there any sinful practice to which you have been addicted, either drunkenness, or fornication, or dishonesty, or falsehood, or evil-speaking? Are you engaged in a calling which you cannot follow with a good conscience? Is there some branch of your business, which, though profitable, is forbidden by the law of God? Are you in a situation, which, however desirable in other respects, yet necessarily draws you into sin? Have you made friendships and connections, which, though in a worldly view advantageous, in a spiritual light are hurtful, and prove a constant snare to your soul? All these are cases supposed and intended in the text; cases in which you are called upon to perform the duty there enjoined. Perform it then, my brethren. Cut off the hand. Pluck out the eye. Deny

that evil passion. Renounce that evil practice. Give up that unlawful calling. Lop off that forbidden branch. Leave that ensnaring situation. Withdraw from those ruinous friendships and connections.—Do these commands sound harsh? Remember, you have already seen and owned them to be *reasonable.* The flesh, we know, will protest against them, and will plead strongly for indulgence. It will tell you, that 'you will 'be torn from enjoyments, which habit has 'made a second nature: that you will lose 'your pleasures, ruin your prospects, make 'the world your enemy, and bring on your-'self disgrace, contempt, and ridicule.'—Listen not to these suggestions. Silence them all by this one thought, that it is *better* to suffer these things, than to be shut out from heaven, than to be cast into hell. Recollect, that "it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life."* Come out and be ye separate. "Put away the accursed thing from you." "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."

For your direction and encouragement in the discharge of this great duty, I would remind you, that if you seriously desire to set about the work, there is a powerful friend, who is ready to assist you with all

* Deut. xxxii. 47.

needful strength and help. It is only "*through the Spirit*," * that you can mortify the deeds of the body; but this Spirit is given to all who pray for it. "Our heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."† It is only through the good Spirit of God working in you, and with you, that you can part with the offending member. But through him you may certainly do it. If you call upon him he will strengthen your weakness, and will "work in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."‡ Nay, through his grace you shall find the work itself far less difficult than you may now suppose it to be. By his divine consolations he will lessen the pain, and abundantly make up the loss, even in this present world. He will provide you with new comforts, new pleasures, new friends, in the room of those which you may give up. He will bestow on you better riches than those which the world can furnish. He will give you inward peace, and abiding joy, and rest unto your soul. Pray then for the Spirit. Go forth in his strength. By his help "crucify the old man, and utterly abolish the whole body of sin."§

* Rom. viii. 13.
† Luke, xi. 13.
‡ Philip. i. 13.
§ Baptism Service.

SERMON V.

THE DAY OF ACCOUNT.

LUKE, xvi. 2.

Give an account of thy Stewardship.

BOTH reason and the Bible agree in teaching us that this life is a state of trial. It is the time allowed to us for working out our Salvation, and preparing for eternity. Short then as this time may be, our everlasting condition depends on the use or abuse we make of it. We shall be happy or miserable for ever, accordingly as we now improve or waste the talents entrusted to our care. God grant! then, my brethren, that we may work, "while it is day; for the night cometh when no man can work!"*

The words of the text are taken from the parable of the unjust steward: the chief design of which was to show, that godly people, in following after heavenly things, may

* John, ix. 4.

do well to copy the diligence and foresight which wicked men use in their pursuit of earthly things. My business, however, in the present discourse, is not with the parable itself, but only with that particular passage, which I have read to you from it; a passage which speaks to us in a most solemn and awful manner, "Give an account of thy stewardship." From these words I shall set before you two important truths:

I. That we are Stewards.

II. That we must one day give an Account of our Stewardship.

And may the consideration of these truths affect our hearts suitably to their vast importance!

I. We are Stewards.

This is true of us in general as men. It is more particularly true of us as Christians. The New Testament frequently puts the matter in this light. While the ministers of the Gospel are called "Stewards of the mysteries of God;"* private Christians are also said to be "Stewards of the manifold grace of God."† But it is in the parable of "the talents,"‡ that we find the clearest view of this truth. The whole parable goes on the supposition that Christians are the

* 1 Cor. iv. 1. † 1 Pet. iv. 10.
‡ Matt. xxv. 14.

stewards of Jesus Christ. He is their master, who delivers to them his goods, with which they are to trade in his absence, till in the end he returns, and reckons with them. Now, there are three respects in which I shall particularly show that we are stewards.

1. Forasmuch as we are put in trust of things, which are not our own. Stewards are those who have the care of other men's goods. They are not owners of the property which they manage. It belongs to some other person, who intrusts it to their keeping. Thus it is with us. We have no property of our own. We have nothing which really belongs to us. Christ is the great proprietor of all. To him, every thing which we have belongs. Our lives are received and held from him. Our bodies and souls are not our own, but his; for he has "bought them with a price."* Our time, our health, our money; the powers of our mind, the means of grace, opportunities of being useful, which we enjoy, all are talents which he has put into our hands. They are goods committed to our care by him, who "divideth to every man severally as he will."—How ought this view of things to check our

* 1 Cor. vi. 20.

pride, and to bring down the high thoughts which we are apt to have of ourselves! My brethren, what cause have we for pride? We have nothing of our own: nothing but what we have received. Let us not take credit to ourselves for things which do not belong to us. Let us know our own place. Let us know what becomes us, and be humble.

2. We are Stewards, inasmuch as we are required diligently to improve our talents in our Master's service, and to his glory. "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."* They are not to be slothful and indolent in the discharge of their office. They are to be careful and active in turning to the best account the goods committed to their trust. The master, in the parable, is represented as saying to his servants, when he delivered to them the pounds, "occupy,"—that is, be busily employed in trading with these my goods, "till I come."† And the same charge is given to us Christians by Christ our Master. Think how many admonitions there are in Scripture to fidelity and diligence in doing the will, and promoting the glory of him, whose servants we are. "Glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." "Whether ye eat or

* 1 Cor. iv. 2. † Luke, xix. 13.

drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."* And we are expressly told, that the improvement of our talents must bear a general proportion to their number and value. "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."† How should this consideration keep down every envious and repining thought at the supposed scantiness of our own gifts, compared with those of others! Have we little committed to us? Instead of complaining that we have no more, let us seek to improve that little. Our wisdom lies not in coveting great talents to ourselves, but in making a right use of those, whatever they may be, which are "given us to profit withal."

3. We are stewards, inasmuch as we are liable every day to be put out of our office. Stewards have no certainty of keeping their place. They hold it only at the will of their employer. He may make any change which he pleases in the kind and quantity of the goods committed to them; or he may altogether take away their stewardship, whensoever he thinks fit. Such also is the case with us. We have no security of being continued

* 1 Cor. vi 20. — x. 31. † Luke, xii. 48.

in our office. We know not how long we may be allowed to hold it. We are entirely dependent on the will of our Master, Jesus Christ. He may make what alteration he chooses in the number and the nature of the talents which he intrusts to our care. He may take away one gift. He may lessen another. He may deprive us of health or of riches. He may give to us fewer means and opportunities of doing good. Or he may at once strip us of our employment, and put us out of our office. He may say to any one of us at any time, "Thou mayest be no longer steward."—"This night thy soul is required of thee." How greatly should this thought quicken our endeavours in redeeming the time and improving our talents! Is the space allowed us for trial so uncertain? Do we so little know when our stewardship may end? Then let us redouble our diligence in faithfully discharging our office while it lasts. Let us work while we have time and opportunity, that at whatever hour our LORD shall come, we may be found ready.

This argument receives additional weight from the other truth, which remains to be considered.

II. That we must one day give an Account of our Stewardship.

Whether our time of trial be long or short; whether our talents be many or few; a day of account must come. Though it was long before the Lord of the servants came, yet at last he returned, and reckoned with them. Every one of them was called upon to give an account of his stewardship. The man who had received one talent was required, equally with him who had received ten talents, to show what he had gained by trading. Thus will it be with us. Christ will call every one of his servants to account. Whatever may have been their station or condition in life, whether they have been high or low, rich or poor, in this respect there will be no difference. Christ will surely say to every one of them, "Give an account of thy stewardship." None will be too great, none too mean, to escape from this enquiry. The king and the slave; the rich man who fares sumptuously every day, and the beggar who is fed with the crumbs from his table; the saint and the sinner must alike give up their account. There is no one truth in Scripture more plainly insisted on than this. It is expressly said, that "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man, whom he hath ordained," even Jesus Christ: "for the

Father hath committed all judgement to the Son;" and "He it is which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead." * Therefore "we shall all stand before the judgement-seat of Christ;" and then "every one of us shall give an account of himself to God." † The solemnities of this great day are described in very aweful language. — "The Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him." "The LORD himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of GOD." "Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations." ‡ The examination also, which will be made into men's lives and characters, will be most strict and searching. "The books shall be opened, and the dead shall be judged out of those things which are written in the books." "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement." "The LORD will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart." § — And for what

* Acts, xvii. 31. — John, v. 22. — Acts, x. 42.
† Rom. xiv. 10. 12.
‡ Matt. xxv. 31, 32. — 1 Thess. iv. 16.
§ Rev. xx. 12. — Matt. xii. 36. — 1 Cor. iv. 5.

purpose will this examination be made, this account be required? For the most solemn and important of all purposes: that "every one may *receive* the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad;" * that every one may receive his just recompence of reward, and be sentenced to that state of happiness or misery in which he will remain for ever; that the faithful stewards, who have improved the talents committed to them, may "have praise of GOD" and be admitted into the joy of their LORD; that the slothful and wicked servants, who have buried or wasted their master's goods, may be exposed, condemned, and "cast into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." And "these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." †

These, my brethren, are truths, which ought to make a deep impression on every heart. But to aid and increase this impression, I shall go more into particulars. Having shown you that we are Stewards, and must one day give an account of our Stewardship, I shall endeavour, by way of application, more clearly and distinctly to point out to you the *nature* of that account; *what* it will be, and *how* it will be required of us. With

* 2 Cor. v. 20. † Matt. xxv. 46.

this view, I shall set before you what we may reasonably conclude will in that day be the grand subject of enquiry to all the servants of CHRIST. Let us suppose this our great Lord and Master then speaking to every one of us in these solemn and searching words:

'"Give an account of thy stewardship." Call to mind the goods and talents which I entrusted to your care: and show what use and improvement you have made of them.

'I gave to you a soul, a reasonable, an immortal, an invaluable soul. I committed this precious treasure to your keeping. — What have you done with it? Have you lost, or have you saved it? What have you done to save it? Have you made the care of your soul your *chief* concern? Amidst all your engagements and employments in the world, has it been your grand, your first business to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling?" I admit that the work was hard, the labour was great, the difficulties were many: but I left you not without sufficient help. I am not the hard master which some represent me to be. I do not expect to reap where I have not sown, nor to gather where I have not strewed. I provided you with ample means for the saving

of your soul. Have you carefully and faithfully employed these means?

'I gave to you my *Word*. What use have you made of this gift? It was "able to save your soul;" "to make you wise unto salvation."* It was intended to be "a lamp unto your feet, and a light unto your paths."† Have you used it as such? Have you "received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God?"‡ Have you read it, meditated on it, prayed over it, and sought for grace that you might understand it, and that it might be mixed with faith in your heart? Have you practised what you did understand of it? Have you governed your life by its holy precepts, doing what it commands, and abstaining from what it forbids? Have you believed its precious promises, casting all your care upon them, and patiently waiting for their accomplishment?

'I gave to you my *Sabbaths*. How have you employed this gift?' My Sabbath was designed to be a day of *holy rest*. I commanded you on that day to cease from worldly labour; — not that you might waste the hours in idleness and worldly pleasure; — but that amidst your earthly callings, you

* James, i. 21. — 2 Tim. iii. 15. † Psalm cxix. 105.
‡ 1 Thess. ii. 13.

might have time to attend your soul, and to provide for eternity. I knew that you were prone to forget these things. I knew that unless some set time was fixed for more especially furthering the work of your salvation, the work itself would be greatly hindered and neglected. For your sake, therefore, I gave to you the Sabbath. I charged you in the most solemn manner to *remember* to keep it holy, and I added the promise of a blessing, if you would diligently observe my command, and would employ this sacred day to the purposes for which I had separated it from all the other days of the week. Have you used it thus? Have you habitually made it a day of *holy* rest, of religious exercise? Have you employed it in taking care of your soul, and in making yourself fitter for heaven? Look back on the many sabbaths which you have enjoyed. Call to mind the way in which you have spent them. They were talents committed to your trust. Have you duly improved them?

'I gave to you my *Ministers*. How have you profited by this gift? I sent them to "watch for your souls;" to remind you of your dangers and your duties; to show you the way of peace; to be your spiritual guides and comforters, helpers of your joy, and furtherers of your salvation. They

were my ambassadors, who came to you in my name, invited you to my kingdom, and prayed you, in my stead, to be reconciled unto me. How did you receive them? Did you "esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake?"* Did you take in good part their friendly admonitions? Did you listen to their words with reverence and attention? Did you pray for a blessing on their labours? Did you wait on their ministry with a view to your own spiritual edification? Did "your profiting appear unto all men?"

'I gave to you the privilege of *Prayer*. Have you improved this privilege? I opened to you a way of access to the throne of mercy. I commanded you to "pray always, and not to faint."† I exhorted you "in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, to let your requests be made known unto GOD."‡ I taught you to pray "in my name."§ I promised that "all things whatsoever you should ask in prayer, believing, you should receive."‖ Have you availed yourself of this privilege? Have you turned it to good account?— Have you prayed constantly, earnestly, in my name, in faith? Have you "cried after

* 1 Thess. v. 13. † Luke, xviii. 1. ‡ Phil. iv. 6.
§ John, xvi. 23. 26. ‖ Matt. xxi. 22.

knowledge, and lifted up your voice for understanding?" Have you daily "poured out your soul" before GOD, and humbly sought Him in every time of need?

'I gave to you the *Promise of my Spirit.* Have you prized and improved this gift? It was this gift which crowned the whole. Had this gift been wanting, every other would have been bestowed in vain. My word, my sabbaths, my ministers, the privilege of prayer, would have profited you nothing, without my Spirit working with them in your hearts. It was my Spirit alone which could give a blessing to those means, and make the use of them serviceable to your souls. But this my Spirit is freely promised to all who ask me.* Have you asked me? Have you anxiously desired me to give my Spirit to *you?* Have you avoided every thing which might grieve and vex him, and drive him from your heart? While you read and heard my word, while you kept my sabbaths, attended my ministers, and drew near to me in prayer, did you do these things, trusting to the promised assistance of my Spirit, and hoping, in the use of these appointed means, to have his grace and power increased and established in your soul?

* Luke, xi. 13.

'And now, what is the *fruit* of all that has been done? In what state do I actually find your soul, now that I require it at your hands? This is at last the test which must decide the point in question. The way in which you have managed your stewardship, will best appear from the simple fact of what your soul now is. Is it pure and holy, dead to sin, and alive unto GOD, made ready for heaven, for living in the presence of GOD, and in the company of saints and angels: "a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work?"* This is the state in which I expect to find your soul. This is the state in which, if you have faithfully improved your talents, I shall find it. Do I find it thus? Is such the state of your soul in this great and solemn day of account?'

My brethren, I know not what reply you will make to these enquiries in that great day. GOD grant! you may be able to show that you have been faithful to your trust, and so may deliver up your account with joy! But remember, that you can never do this, unless you now give diligence to make "your calling and election sure."† Opportunities lost, and talents wasted, must

* 2 Tim. ii. 21. † 2 Peter, i. 10.

lead to shame and misery. Time is flying away on a swift wing. Every day which passes over our heads is swelling the amount of that long reckoning, which we must hereafter give. Let us lay these things to heart, and live with this truth ever in our minds, that "after death cometh the Judgment."*

* Heb. ix. 27.

SERMON VI.

SCRIPTURAL VIEW OF TRUE RELIGION.

GALATIANS, vi. 15.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

TRUE Religion is to us "the one thing needful:" for without it we can have no real peace in this world, nor any happiness in the next. It is then of the highest importance to us, to have right notions of religion; to know what it is, and in what it is placed. And this is the more necessary, because there are so many mistakes on the subject; because there are so many things which pass for religion, when in fact they are very far from being what they pretend to be. In this view the text is particularly useful; for it gives in few words a description of what we are so greatly concerned to know. "In CHRIST

JESUS," that is, in the Christian religion, which is the only true religion, what alone "availeth any thing;" what is of any value, or proves that we have any share in the blessings of the Gospel, is, "not circumcision nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." In this passage we may consider the Apostle as pointing out to us two things.

I. What true Religion is not.

II. What it is.

I. True Religion is "not circumcision nor uncircumcision." Circumcision was a Jewish sacrament. It was the rite appointed by GOD as the door into the Jewish church. It was the sign and seal of his covenant; and under that dispensation the distinguishing outward mark of his people. So long, therefore, as the Jewish church and dispensation lasted, this ordinance could not be neglected by any who would be truly religious. Though even then the mere performance of the ceremony did not make men religious; much less did it form the whole of true religion. But the Gospel, when it came, put an end to the ceremonial law. The Christian church came in the place of the Jewish church. And the sacrament of baptism was appointed by CHRIST as the door into the Christian co-

venant. From that time then the rite of circumcision ceased to be a sacrament. The performance of it was no longer enforced by the command of GOD. It was henceforth a ceremony perfectly indifferent. Whether a person was circumcised or not, became a matter of no consequence. If a Christian happened to have been circumcised, as he was not on that account the better, so neither was he the worse, provided he did not trust to this ceremony for salvation, and so put it in the place of CHRIST. On the other hand, the uncircumcised Gentile, who embraced the Gospel, was equally admitted to all the privileges of Christianity. His wanting this mark did not shut him out from the blessings of that church; "where there is neither Greek not Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Scythian, bond, nor free; but CHRIST is all and in all."* Thus, then, as says the Apostle in the text, "in CHRIST JESUS, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision." True religion is not placed in these things. Nor in fact is it placed in any outward forms, rites, or ceremonies. This is the general truth, which the Apostle may be understood to teach. And a most important truth it is. For

* Col. iii. 11.

men ever have been prone to rest in these things. They naturally prefer the form of godliness to the power of it. They find it easier to perform rites and ceremonies, than to practise faith and holiness. Hence it has come to pass, that those teachers who have laid an undue stress on outward things in religion, have always found numbers ready to believe and follow them. It was so in the Galatian church, when St. Paul wrote his Epistle. And it has been more or less so in every age of the church. In our own days we are not altogether free from this error. So that to expose and condemn it is still a necessary part of a minister's duty. He is still called upon to remind his hearers of this important truth, that "in CHRIST JESUS, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision."

In the full meaning and spirit then of this truth let me remind you, my brethren, that True Religion is not an outward thing. It does not consist in names or forms, in distinctions or privileges, in meats or drinks, in rites or ceremonies. This general truth contains many particulars.

You are not religious merely because you have been baptized. Baptism, indeed, is one of the Christian sacraments. And he that would be saved, must "repent, and be bap-

tized in the name of JESUS CHRIST, for the remission of sins."* But baptism in the Christian church, like circumcision in the Jewish, does not of itself make men religious. What St. Paul says of the Jew, is equally true of the Christian. "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly."† Nor is a man a Christian merely because he has received the outward seal of the covenant. Simon Magus believed and was baptized: and yet St. Peter afterwards assured him that he "had neither part nor lot in the matter: for his heart was not right in the sight of GOD;" he was "still in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity."‡ Now what was *his* case may be *yours*. Though you have been baptized, you may yet have no part nor lot in the matter.

Again, you are not religious merely because you are called a Christian, and have been born of christian parents. This was a great mercy conferred on you, and may have proved a special blessing. But it is not religion. It was the boast of the Jews, that they were the children of Abraham at the time when John the Baptist called them a "generation of vipers."§ It was the boast of Saul that he was "of the stock of

* Acts, ii. 38. † Rom. ii. 28.
‡ Acts, viii. 21. 23. § Luke, iii. 7, 8.

Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews*," at the very time when he was, as he himself afterwards tells us, "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious." † The same Apostle also declares, that "they are not all Israel which are of Israel." ‡ And as it was then, so it is now. All are not real Christians who are called Christians, and have been born of Christian parents.

Further, you are not religious merely because you frequent the church, attend the Lord's Supper, and are regular at your devotions. These things are necessary to be done as *means* of making and keeping you religious, nor can you be truly religious without doing them; but the mere doing of them is not religion. There were many of the Pharisees, who probably went far beyond you in all these performances. They fasted often, they made long prayers; they were scrupulously exact in all the ceremonies of religious worship; but at the same time they were but hypocrites, "whited sepulchres," as our Saviour calls them, "beautiful outward, but within full of all uncleanness." § Notwithstanding, then, your attention to these outward parts of religion, you may be no better than the Pharisees were. You may

* Phil. iii. 5.
† 1 Tim. i. 13.
‡ Rom. ix. 6.
§ Matt. xxiii. 27.

fast, and say your prayers, and come to church, and communicate at the LORD's table, and be but *whited sepulchres* at last. You may do all these things, and yet have no true religion. Let us enquire,

II. What true Religion is.

If it be not circumcision nor uncircumcision, what is it? St. Paul tells us it is "*a new creature.*" True religion is not an outward but an inward thing. It relates not merely to the outer, but to the inner man. It consists not in forms and ceremonies, but in the state and dispositions of the heart. It is not a new name, but a new nature. This is plainly the Apostle's meaning. When he says, that in CHRIST JESUS neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a *new creature*," he clearly means to say, that all pretensions to religion, without a great and thorough change, wrought in the heart by the power of GOD, are nothing and of no avail. The expression which he uses implies at once the *greatness* of the change as well as the *power* by which it is wrought.

A *new creature*, or a *new creation*, as the word may mean, describes a very great change in a man. It signifies the making him quite a different kind of person from what he was before. It denotes such a

change as took place when GOD at the creation of the world turned darkness into light and confusion into order. And this is the very view which St. Paul gives of this change in another place, when he says, that "GOD, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," that is, at the creation of the world, "hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of GOD in the face of JESUS CHRIST." * St. Peter also gives the same account of the matter. He describes the change which true religion makes in a man, by the expression of his being "called out of darkness into a marvellous light." † Now such a change must needs be a very great one. It must be a thorough change of the whole man; a change of the soul, which is a man's self; a change of his mind and judgment, of his views and principles; putting into him new desires, and motives, and resolutions, and producing a suitable change of life and conduct.

The greatness of this change shows also the *power* by which it is wrought. Creation is a divine work. None can create but GOD. He it was who said, "Let there be light, and there was light." ‡ He alone formed

* 2 Cor. iv. 6. † 1 Peter, ii. 9.
‡ Gen. i. 3.

man at first, and he alone can form him again. He alone can shine into the heart, and renew the soul. The change, therefore, which is here described, is a divine work. It is a great inward change wrought by the power of God. This is what availeth. Nothing will avail but this. It is all in all in religion.

Such is the doctrine which the Apostle here lays down. And, is it not a doctrine which the whole Bible equally lays down? Assuredly it is. There is not any one point more clearly taught in Scripture than the absolute necessity, in order to our being truly religious, of such a change as has been here described. In proving this point, the only difficulty lies in making choice of proofs; for there are so many, that to bring all would be impossible.

The very rite of circumcision itself taught the necessity of this change. For though it was a "*seal* of the righteousness of faith*," yet it was also a *sign* of the inward renewal and purification of the heart. Thus the Israelites were exhorted by Moses to "circumcise their hearts;" and by the prophet Jeremiah, to "circumcise themselves unto the Lord."† Thus St. Paul expressly says, that "neither is that circumcision, which is

* Rom. iv. 11. † Deut. x. 16. — Jer. iv. 4.

outward in the flesh; but circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter:" while in another place he calls that very change of which we speak, "the circumcision made without hands, in the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh." * These texts show what circumcision really meant; what was the great truth at which it pointed. And in view of this truth, St. Stephen, when speaking to the unbelieving Jews, calls them, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in hearts and ears." †

Baptism, also, in the Christian church, teaches the same truth. For while this sacrament *seals* to those who duly partake of it the remission of their sins, and their adoption into the family of GOD, it also *signifies* the necessity of their being cleansed from the pollution of sin, by the sanctifying grace of the Spirit: that so, "being buried with CHRIST by baptism unto death — they should hereafter walk in newness of life." ‡ St. Peter gives the same account of this sacrament, when he says, that baptism is "not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards GOD §:" which no man can have till

* Rom. iv. 28, 29. — Col. ii. 11. † Acts, vii. 51.
‡ Rom. iv. 4. § 1 Peter, iii. 21.

his heart be created anew in CHRIST JESUS unto good works.

When Nicodemus, the Jewish ruler, came to our Saviour, and enquired of him concerning the truths which he was come from GOD to teach, the necessity of this change was the very first thing which Jesus made known to him. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of GOD." * That a renovation of our nature, which in the text is called a *new creature*, is here said to be a *new birth;* and the utter impossibility of being religious without it is directly stated. When Nicodemus expressed his astonishment at this saying, and asked, "How can a man be born when he is old?" JESUS again insisted on the *necessity* of the change, and showed more clearly both the nature of the change and the power by which it was to be wrought; "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit," except he undergo such a change as the washing of water signifies, and the Spirit of GOD produces, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of GOD." And then, to leave no doubt as to the truth of these things, he explains the *reason* of this change, shows *why* a man must be born again, and *whence*

* John, iii. 3.

this necessity springs. It springs from the very nature of man in his present fallen state. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Man is naturally *flesh*, that is, corrupt and evil, carnal and sold under sin; and as such he can offer to GOD no spiritual nor acceptable service. It is that "which is born of the Spirit, that is Spirit." It is only when a man is changed by the Spirit of GOD, that he can "worship him in spirit and in truth." And therefore, "marvel not that ye must be born again." This is a truth which ought not to raise your wonder; for it is level to your understanding, and capable of the clearest proof.

And hence we may further observe, that all those texts of Scripture which set forth the evil nature of man, in fact set forth the necessity of this great change; for while his nature is evil, how can he be truly religious? Before he can be so, he must of necessity have a new nature. If the children of Adam be "begotten in his likeness, after his image*," how can they become the children of GOD, without being begotten again in the divine likeness, after the divine image? If "every imagination of the thought of man's heart be only evil continually;" if "the heart be deceitful above all things,

* Gen. v. 3.

and desperately wicked;" if "the heart of the sons of men be full of evil*," (and who can doubt that this is the case, for GOD has said it?) then there must be a new heart, a deep, an entire change in the inner man, or there can be no true religion. If the soul be naturally "dead in trespasses and sins†," it must be quickened and made alive unto righteousness. If "the understanding be" naturally "darkened‡," the eyes of the understanding must be opened. If "the carnal," that is, the natural "mind be enmity against GOD §," there must be a transformation "by the renewing of the mind." ‖ These are plain consequences, which every one must see and allow; for so long as the soul be dead, the understanding darkened, and the mind alienated from GOD, how can a man be truly religious, and "serve GOD acceptably with reverence and godly fear?" ¶ Since "they who are in the flesh," that is, in their natural, carnal, unrenewed state, "cannot please GOD**:" and since all men naturally are thus in the flesh, (for as we have seen above in the words of CHRIST himself, that "what is born of the flesh, is flesh,") it

* Gen. vi. 5. — Jer. xvii. 19. — Eccles. ix. 3.
† Ephes. xi. 1.
‡ Ephes. iv. 18.
§ Rom. viii. 7.
‖ Rom. xii. 2.
¶ Heb. xii. 28.
** Rom. viii. 8.

follows of course, that all men, in order to please GOD, must be born of His Spirit, and become new creatures.

Lastly, the way in which Christians are spoken of in Scripture, is an additional proof to the truth before us. They are constantly described as having actually undergone this change. They are said to be "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of GOD."* They are spoken of as having been "sometime darkness, but now light in the LORD;" as having been once "dead, but now alive again;" as having been "sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another," but now "saved by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the HOLY GHOST."† They are represented as "walking not in the flesh, but in the spirit;" as "renewed in the spirit of their minds;" as being "GOD's workmanship, created in CHRIST JESUS unto good works;" as having "CHRIST formed in them."‡ They are said to have "put off concerning their former conversation the

* John, i. 13. † Ephes. v. 6. — Luke, xv. 24. and Rom. vi. 13. — Titus, iii. 3. 5.

‡ Rom. viii. 1. — Ephes. iv. 23. — Ephes. ii. 10. — Gal. iv. 19.

old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to have put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."* In short, to sum up all in one single passage, which of itself fully explains and confirms the doctrine in the text; St. Paul expressly tells the Corinthians, that "if any man be in CHRIST, he *is* a new creature: old things are passed away: behold *all things* are become new."†

Such, my brethren, is the view which the text gives of true Religion. Here you see what it is, and in what it is placed. Do your notions of it agree with the view thus given? Are you aware that, in order to your becoming truly religious, your heart must be changed and made new by the power and Spirit of GOD? Are you aware that true Religion must *begin* in this change and renewal of the heart? Perhaps you have hitherto imagined, that your own natural dispositions and endeavours, when aided and strengthened by divine grace, would be sufficient for all religious purposes. Perhaps you have imagined, that, if the tree were dug about, and improved by cultivation, it would of itself bring forth good fruit. Do you now see that this idea was wrong? Do you now see that a corrupt

* Ephes. iv. 22. 24. † 2 Cor. v. 17.

tree *cannot* bring forth good fruit: that no care and culture can make it do this? Do you now see, that before the tree can be good, and its fruit good, its nature must be changed, and a new graft put into it? It is of the utmost consequence that you should see this matter aright. For so long as you mistake here, you cannot but go wrong. To think of becoming religious without being "born again," would be the same as to think of walking in the narrow way without having first entered in at the strait gate. Here only it is that we can set forward in the path of eternal life. To think that we can "climb up some other way" is absurd and vain. To attempt it will be ruinous. Let all such thoughts and attempts be laid aside. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Seek of GOD that renovation of the soul, which is all in all in religion. Pray, earnestly pray, that you may be "born from above, born again of the Spirit:" that so, being made "new creatures in CHRIST JESUS," you may be fitted for serving GOD acceptably in this world, and for seeing him and dwelling with him for ever in the world to come.

SERMON VII.

ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SOWING TO THE FLESH, AND TO THE SPIRIT.

GALATIANS vi. 7, 8.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

WE have here an instance of the plain manner of teaching used in the Holy Scriptures. St. Paul is desirous of showing that holiness in this life will certainly be followed by happiness in the next, and of exposing the folly of those persons, who think that they may spend their lives in sin, and yet go to heaven when they die. He says to them, in words which cannot be misunderstood, "Be not deceived; GOD is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." It is well known

how much the future crop of the husbandman depends on his improvement of the seed-time. If he should let this season pass by without sowing his seed in the earth; if instead of sowing good seed, he should sow only weeds and thistles, the consequence must be, that when his wiser and more industrious neighbours shall be gathering their fruits into their barns he will be reaping only shame, vaxation, and poverty.

Thus it is with our souls. This life is the seed-time for eternity. If this opportunity be once lost, it can never be recovered. If it be turned to a bad use, there will be no preventing the consequence. What a man sows here, he will most certainly reap hereafter. "He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

These are plain truths, and truths as important as they are plain. They are truths in which we are all infinitely concerned: truths, therefore, which I shall endeavour to fix deeply in our minds. To this end let us consider the two different kinds of husbandry, which men follow with respect to their souls, and the different produce of each; these things are set before us in the text.

I. We have a description of the man who "soweth to his flesh."

By "his flesh" is meant not merely his body, but that evil and depraved state of the soul, which he inherits from Adam, and brought with him into the world. "For that which is born of the flesh, is flesh."* It is called in Scripture by many different names, which plainly show what it is; as "the carnal mind,"—"the body of sin,"—"the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts."† Since the tree, however, is best known by its fruits, we shall form a clearer idea of what is meant by "the flesh," when we look at its works. Now these works, says St. Paul, "are manifest." They are such as may be easily seen, and distinctly show what the flesh is. They are "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like."‡ More need not be added to explain this point. When such is the dreadful offspring, there can be no doubt as to what the parent must be. If such be the works of the flesh, what the flesh itself must be is clear.

* John, iii. 3. † Rom. viii. 7.; vi. 6.—Ephes. iv. 22.
‡ Gal. v. 19, 20, 21.

What then is it to *sow* to the flesh? It is to spend our lives in doing these works of the flesh; to lay out our time, our thoughts, and our care in gratifying the vain, sensual, and selfish inclinations, which this evil state of the heart naturally and continually puts forth. It is the same as what is elsewhere meant in the sacred writings by "walking after the imaginations of our own hearts,"—"by walking after the flesh,"—"minding the things of the flesh,"—"fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind,"—"obeying sin in the lusts thereof."* The man who soweth to his flesh is one of whom it may be truly said, that "GOD is not in all his thoughts;" that is, to any good or real purpose. He may say that he knows GOD; but he lives to the world. Self is the great idol which he worships. The questions which are ever first in his mind are these: "Who will show me any good?"† "How shall I best take care of my own ease, interest, reputation, or enjoyment?" These things he follows with the utmost eagerness: and for the sake of them neglects the interests of his soul, and of eternity. He may make, perhaps, some show of religion; but he has only the form of

* Jer. ix. 14.—Rom. viii. 4, 5.—Ephes. ii. 3.—Rom. vi. 12. † Psalm iv. 6.

it, without the power. He has neither "repentance towards GOD" nor "faith towards our LORD JESUS CHRIST." What godly sorrow, indeed, can he feel for sin, when in his heart he loves it? What daily trust can he place on CHRIST for pardon and strength, when he knows nothing of his own guilt and weakness? In short, his treasure is upon earth, and where his treasure is, there his heart is also. He loves the world, and the things of the world. Here is his portion. Here his affections are set. In the strong language of Scripture, "his god is his belly; his glory is in his shame; he minds earthly things." *

Such is the man who soweth to his flesh. And what will be the fruit of his labours? As he has sown, so shall he reap. He has sown to the flesh, and "of the flesh he shall reap corruption." — "The pleasures of sin are but for a season." They all perish in the using. They cannot satisfy the soul now, and they leave a dreadful sting behind. Broken health, loathsome diseases, ruined fortunes, disappointed wishes, soured tempers, infamy, and shame, are among those things, which usually come from walking after the flesh. But if a man escape all these evils, (as some, perhaps, who sow to the flesh

* Phil. iii. 19.

do escape them,) if he live here in comfort, and credit, and prosperity, yet this state of things cannot last for ever. He must one day die; and then he will fully reap the corruption for which he has been so long labouring. Then "shall he eat of the fruit of his own way, and be filled with his own devices."* He will then too late find the misery of his choice. All the wicked gratifications, in which he has here placed his happiness, will be no more. A load of unpardoned sin will lie upon his conscience with an intolerable weight; while the body and soul will be miserably tormented in hell, with the devil and his angels. This is the corruption which he who sows to the flesh shall reap of the flesh.

II. We have an account of the man who "soweth to the spirit."

The spirit is directly contrary to the flesh; for as the flesh is that evil nature which we have from the first Adam, so the spirit is that new and holy nature, which comes to us from JESUS CHRIST, who is "the second Adam, the Lord from heaven." It is called *the spirit*, because the Holy Spirit is the author and supporter of it; because it puts into us spiritual desires and affections; and because it enables us to

* Prov. i. 31.

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become spiritual worshippers of God, and to give to him, in some measure, a spiritual obedience. There can be no true religion in the soul of man, but what is first begun, and afterwards carried on, by the Spirit of God. Hence the real Christian is said to be "born again of the Spirit," to be "saved by the renewing of the Holy Ghost."* Great and glorious are the consequences of this spiritual birth. For the spirit, like the flesh, is known by its fruits, and its fruits are these, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, righteousness, and truth."†

To sow then to the spirit, is to live under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, and in every part of our conduct to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. It is the same with what in other places is called "walking in the spirit,"—"minding the things of the spirit,"—"yielding the members as instruments of righteousness unto God."‡ The man who "soweth to the spirit," is one, who lives unto God, and serves him with a willing mind. Awakened to a sense of his guilt and danger as a sinner, he has fled to Christ for refuge from the wrath to come;

* John, iii. 5.—Titus, iii. 5. † Gal. v. 22, 23.
‡ Gal. v. 16.—Rom. viii. 5.—vi. 3.

and in the daily use of faith and prayer, trusts to him for pardon, grace, and holiness. He lives not to the world. He does not indeed leave his station, nor neglect his duty in life. His conscience does not suffer him to be "slothful in business." He attends with diligence to the concerns of his proper calling, as being a part of that work which the LORD has here given to him to do. But his *heart* is not in the world. None of these things are his treasure. His affections are set on things above, not on things in the earth. His secret prayer is, "LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me*;" and in an humble sense of GOD's love and favour to his soul, he looks for a pleasure far beyond that which the greatest worldly prosperity could give. — He lives not to himself. He thinks kindly and tenderly of others. He feels for them; prays for them; wishes and seeks their good both in body and soul. He does not push his own interests at their expense: nay, he chooses rather to lose a part, even of his strict right, than, by insisting on it too strongly, to distress his neighbour. In short, he is constantly fighting against the flesh and its lusts: he spares no sin; he

* Psalm iv. 6.

practises much self-denial; and labours daily in all things to keep a conscience void of offence towards GOD and man. Is he called to suffer for conscience' sake? He suffers patiently, assured that if he suffer with CHRIST, he shall also reign with him. Is he afflicted? He murmurs not, knowing that he who "sows in tears, shall reap in joy."*

And what shall he reap? The text tells us, "life everlasting." This shall be the fruit of his labour; this the reward of his patient continuance in well-doing. He has "sown to the spirit, and of the spirit he shall reap life everlasting." All the ways of religion are really ways of pleasantness and peace. The truly religious man, that is, he who "sows to the spirit," enjoys even *at present*, in no small degree, the fruit of his labour. For "to be spiritually minded is life and peace."† He feels in this world an inward peace and joy, of which they who sow to the flesh have no knowledge nor conception. He has peace with GOD. He has the testimony of an approving conscience. He has a hope full of immortality. That Holy Spirit under whose guidance he lives, dwells with him as a Comforter; puts into him divine consola-

* Psalm cxxvi. 5. † Rom. viii. 6.

tions; and at times, it may be, fills him even "with joy unspeakable and full of glory."— All this, however, is but the beginning, the foretaste, the earnest of that happiness which is laid up for him *hereafter*. Faint at present are our ideas of that glory, which is prepared in heaven for the saints, and which in the text is described by the words "life everlasting." To raise our thoughts of it, however, and to give to us high notions of its greatness and excellence, it is set forth in Scripture, as "a kingdom which cannot be moved,"— "a crown of righteousness,"— "an inheritance incorruptible,"— "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory:" in short, a something, which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man."* This will be the harvest, which he who now sows to the spirit, shall hereafter reap of the spirit. While those who have sown to the flesh, are reaping corruption, "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire," *he* will reign with CHRIST in glory; and will feel a happiness which knows no end, and which will be growing greater and greater for ever and ever.

* Heb. xii. 28. — 2 Tim. iv. 8. — 1 Pet. i. 4. — 2 Cor. iv. 17. — 1 Cor. ii. 9.

Having thus led you to consider the truths set before us in the text, I shall now shortly apply them.

There is one question, my brethren, which I would put in the most serious and earnest manner to every one's heart. 'To which 'are you sowing, to the flesh or to the 'spirit?' You must be sowing to one of them. To which is it? Consider how important this question is. If you are now sowing to the flesh, you will reap corruption. Nothing but a timely and a total change of heart can prevent this consequence. Examine then yourselves on this great point. You may be deceiving yourselves as to your real state. But remember the charge in the text, "Be not deceived; GOD is not mocked." You cannot deceive Him. He clearly sees whether you are sowing to the flesh or to the spirit. May he give you grace to see it as clearly!

There are some marks of sowing to the flesh so plain, that the slightest attention will show them. Are you living in the practice of any known sin, of any one work of the flesh? Are you living in the practice of adultery, or of fornication, or of theft, or of drunkenness, or of reviling, or of injustice, or of any other open breach of the divine law? If you do not daily commit

any one of these sins, yet you are ready to commit them whenever the temptation may offer, and a suitable opportunity present itself. In this case, my brethren, the matter is as clear as the day. There can be no doubt of your state. You are most assuredly sowing to the flesh. And, oh! what a dreadful harvest will you reap! You may now flatter yourselves that you shall escape at last. "But be not deceived; GOD is not mocked. He will render to every man according to his works. Neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall enter the kingdom of GOD."* "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, shall be upon every soul of man that doeth evil."† As he hath sown, so shall he reap.

But there are other marks of sowing to the flesh, which if not at first sight so plain, yet are no less certain. Do you live unto the world and not unto GOD? Covetousness is a sin which proves a man to be walking after the flesh. And what is covetousness? It is an excessive love of the things of the world. Hence it is expressly said to be "Idolatry‡;" an idolatrous love of the creature above the Creator;

* 1 Cor. vi. 9. † Rom. ii. 9. ‡ Col. iii. 5.

a "setting up of our idols in our heart." Where then is your heart? On what are your affections chiefly fixed? What is that thing which you follow with the greatest eagerness? Is it money? Is it pleasure? Is it the favour of man? Is it any earthly good? Alas! my brethren, if this be the case, you are sowing to the flesh, and cannot but reap corruption. You are bringing on yourselves disappointment here, and everlasting misery hereafter. You must in this world "seek first the kingdom of GOD, and his righteousness," or be for ever shut out from his presence and favour in the world to come.

Try your state by another mark. Are you living to yourself? Are you indulging any one of the corrupt desires of your own heart? Remember, he that sows to the spirit, must practise self-denial. Perhaps on some occasions when your worldly good is concerned, you *do* deny yourself. You check your anger, when a mild behaviour will best suit your purpose. You keep your tongue from evil-speaking, when you are in the presence of those whom you wish to please. But this is not the self-denial of the Christian. Do you mortify your evil inclinations from a regard to GOD, and to the good of your soul? Do you mortify not

some *few*, but *all* of them? Is there no lust which you secretly spare? While you keep from what you call great sins, do you not give way to wrath, to malice, to envy, to a peevish disposition, to a contentious spirit, to a false or an uncharitable tongue? These are all works of the flesh: and he who allows himself to live in the practice of one of them, is sowing to the flesh as really as he who lives in habits of adultery, of drunkenness, or of theft.

This may be deemed a hard saying. But it becomes the minister of the Gospel to be plain in a matter wherein the souls of his hearers are at stake. He might flatter and deceive them; but who would be the better for such a conduct? Let it be granted that to mortify the flesh is indeed a work most painful to our nature. Does not this very thing prove that it is a necessary work? If to root out our lusts be so difficult a task, this very circumstance shows how deeply rooted our lusts are in our hearts. And is it not *better* to cut off the offending member, "than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire?" *

Do you ask, then, what course you should take? There is but one, which you can take with safety: "sow to the spirit." Repent

* Matt. xviii. 18.

and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Pray to GOD, that you may be "born again of the Spirit;" that by the teaching of the Spirit you may be brought to know JESUS CHRIST and Him crucified; that you may live under the guidance of the Spirit; through the Spirit may mortify the deeds of the body; and in every part of your conduct may abound in the fruits of the Spirit. So shall an entrance be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. Thus "sowing to the spirit, you shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

SERMON VIII.

THE FAITHFUL SAYING.

1 TIM. i. 15.

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

THE prophet Isaiah complained, "Who hath believed our report?" And the ministers of the Gospel have too much cause for making a like complaint. Their report, like his, is but little attended to and believed, though it has every thing in itself which can deserve attention and demand belief. It is, in fact, the very report contained in the text, of which St. Paul declares that it is "A faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation." In discoursing on this passage, let us consider,

I. What this report or saying is.

II. What is the account here given of it.

I. The saying is this, "JESUS CHRIST came into the world to save sinners." For

the full understanding of these words, there are several particulars which need enquiry.

1. Who is JESUS CHRIST? In the words of his Apostle, St. Peter, we reply, that he is "The Son of the Living GOD*;" his Son, not by creation, as the angels are his sons; his Son, not by adoption, as men become his sons; but his Son by generation. As he himself tells us, "The only begotten Son of GOD, — which is in the bosom of the FATHER." † He is the "Word, who was in the beginning with GOD, and was GOD:" equal to and "one with the FATHER:" "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person ‡:" "GOD of GOD: light of light; very GOD of very GOD." — He is the Creator und Upholder of all things: for "all things were made by HIM, and without HIM was not any thing made that was made." "By HIM were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible or invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by HIM, and for HIM; and HE is before all things, and by HIM all things consist." § He is "LORD of

* Matt. xvi. 16. † John, iii. 18. — i. 18. ‡ John, i. 1. — x. 38. — Heb. i. 3. § John, i. 3. — Col. i. 16, 17.

lords, and King of kings," — "the First and the Last," — "the Beginning and the Ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the ALMIGHTY." — "Who is over all, GOD blessed for ever." * Such is JESUS CHRIST.

2. What is meant by his coming into the world? These words cannot be spoken of him as GOD. As GOD he could not be said to *come* into the world: for as GOD he had always been in the world. "Heaven was his throne, and the earth was his footstool." He was here and every where present. Whereas *to come into the world* denotes a more *immediate entering* into it. The expression seems to signify his *appearing* in the world, his *making himself known* to it in some different way from what he had before done. And this was precisely the case. For he was made man, and appeared in human nature, and became partaker of flesh and blood. As St. Paul expresses it, "GOD was manifest in the flesh;" or, as St. John says, "the SON of GOD was manifested;" and again, "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the FATHER, full of grace and

* Rev. xix. 16.; i. 8. 11. — Rom. ix. 5.

truth."* This, then, is what is meant by JESUS CHRIST's *coming into the world.* "Being in the form of God,—he yet took on him the form of a servant."† He laid aside his glory, and came down from heaven, and was "found in fashion as a man." He humbled himself to be "made of a woman‡;" to be born in a stable; to be wrapped in swaddling clothes; to be laid in a manger. He submitted to share our infirmities, to become "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." To be made subject to sickness, pain, and death. What a depth of humiliation was this! The Creator condescending to become a creature! The ALMIGHTY in great humility visiting the works of his hands! The LORD of life and glory sojourning and suffering in a house of clay!

We enquire, then,

3. Why did he thus come? The coming of so wonderful a person, in so extraordinary a manner, must surely have been for some very important end. It could not have been for a slight, a trifling purpose, that the eternal SON of GOD should have thus humbled himself and have come into the world. No: it

* 1 Tim. iii. 16. — 1 John, iii. 8. — John, i. 14.
† Phil. ii. 6, 7. ‡ Gal. iv. 4.

was for the greatest, the most gracious, the most glorious purpose; a purpose which fills heaven itself with wonder and admiration, and will for ever fill it with joy and praise. It was "to save sinners," the guilty children of fallen Adam: who had corrupted their way before the Lord, had broken his laws, and rebelled against his government; and were still abusing, to the vilest purpose, those gifts, which in his mercy and long-suffering he was still continuing to them. Yet these he came to save. Could it have ever been thought, that such would be the purpose of his coming? Had we been told that the Son of the Most High was about to visit the world which he had made, — a world thus "lying in wickedness*," and daily provoking his righteous indignation, — what could we have thought would have been the purpose of his coming, but to punish and destroy the world? With what other object should he come, but as the messenger of wrath, the minister of vengeance, to execute judgment on his enemies, and to pour on his rebellious creatures deserved destruction? But, oh! unthought-of goodness! astonishing mercy! "God sent not his

* John, v. 9.

Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." * JESUS CHRIST came into the world, —not to condemn, not to punish, not to destroy,—but to save. His message was a message of love. His ministry was a ministry of mercy. He "came to seek and to save that which was lost†;" to "save sinners;" to "call sinners to repentance‡;" to purchase salvation for them by his own atoning blood; to propose to them terms by which they might be saved.

We ask, then,

4. What is meant by being saved? What is the salvation which JESUS brings to sinners? To be saved is to be delivered from danger. Sinners are in the greatest danger. Having broken GOD's law, they are exposed to the curse of that law. Having corrupted themselves, destroyed GOD's image in their souls, and become the slaves of sin and Satan, they are in danger of "the wrath to come." —There is a wrath to come. Already it "is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." § Now it "abideth ‖" on sinners. Hereafter it will come upon them to the

* John, iii. 17. † Luke, xix. 10. ‡ Matt. ix. 13.
§ Rom. i. 18. ‖ John, ii. 36.

uttermost: "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil."* This is the end of sin; the end which sinners have brought upon themselves, and which of themselves they cannot avoid. But JESUS opens to them a way of escape. He "delivers from the wrath to come."† He offers to redeem them from this curse of the law; to pluck them as brands out of the fire; to save them from the dreadful consequences of sin, from the malice of Satan, from the prison of hell, from "the bitter pains of eternal death."‡

Great, however as this deliverance is, it is but a *part* of that salvation, which JESUS provides for sinners. To him it was but a small thing to bring them out of misery. He purposed also to bring them to happiness: yea, to much greater happiness than that which they had lost by sin. It did not satisfy his mighty love merely to rescue them from hell. He opened to them the kingdom of heaven. He designed not only to take away their guilt, and procure the pardon of their sins, but to restore them to a state of favour with GOD; to place them again among his children; to break the

* Rom. ii. 9. † 1 Thess. i. 10. ‡ Burial Service.

chains of sin, with which they were tied and bound; to renew their souls to the divine image and likeness; and so having fitted them for dwelling with himself in glory, to bestow on them the gift of eternal life. — This is his salvation. Hence it is called an "eternal salvation;" — "the salvation which is in JESUS CHRIST with eternal glory." * Hence to be *saved*, in the scriptural meaning of the word, signifies to be delivered from every thing which is evil and dreadful, and to be put in possession of every thing which is good and happy. It describes the greatest possible change in the state of a sinner, which words can express, or thoughts conceive. Represent to your minds those deep and dark abodes, where unpardoned sinners, together with the devil and his angels, are suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Then lift up your eyes to heavenly places. There see the saints in light, for ever set free from sickness, grief, and death, rejoicing with joy unspeakable in the favour and presence of the Lord, bearing his image, and beholding his glory. And thus see what is meant by being saved; what is that salvation, which JESUS brings to sinners.

* Heb. v. 9.—2 Tim. ii. 10.

Upon the whole, then, our report is this: 'That there is salvation for sinners through 'JESUS CHRIST; that the Son of GOD 'came down from heaven to be their 'SAVIOUR; that by HIM a way is opened 'into heaven for those who must other-'wise have miserably perished in their 'sins.'

Let us enquire,

II. What is the account here given of this report?

Is it a *true* report? This is the first thing to be asked: for every thing depends on this. If it be not true, it is worth nothing. In answer to this question, St. Paul assures us, that it is a *faithful* saying; one, which is undoubtedly true; one, on which we may most certainly depend; a saying entitled to full credit. In fact it is a report which has the same claim to our belief with the Bible itself. For it runs through the whole Bible, and it is to be found in almost every part of it. It cannot, therefore, be disbelieved, without disbelieving the Bible itself; while every proof, which confirms the truth of the Scripture, confirms also the truth of this saying in the text. Consider then what manifold and abundant testimony is given; look at the many won-

derful miracles by which GOD at different times has confirmed the truth of his word. Look at the long train of prophecies, many of which have been exactly fulfilled, many of which are at this very day fulfilling. By all these witnesses GOD declares that the saying in the text is a *faithful* saying. Look at the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST. By what stronger proof could GOD have shown that JESUS CHRIST was come into the world to save sinners, than by raising him from the dead to complete that salvation? Attend to another kind of proof; to the experience of thousands, of millions, who have found this saying "a faithful saying;" who, coming to JESUS CHRIST for salvation, have felt the blessings of it; have found their hearts changed, and their souls delivered from the power of sin; have been begotten again unto a lively hope; and even in this present life have enjoyed the foretaste and earnest of eternal salvation. These are a cloud of witnesses to the truth before us. GOD grant that the number of them may yet be greatly increased! Grant that more and more of us may be enabled from the heart to say, 'I *know* that JESUS CHRIST has come into the world to save sinners, for he has saved me. He has set me free from the chains of sin. He has delivered me from

this present evil world. He has written his law in my mind, and shed abroad his love in my heart. He has taught me to seek and to follow that which is good, and has given to me that peace which passeth all understanding." This is to have the witness in ourselves. Let us seek to have this inward witness abiding in our hearts: and we shall then know *indeed* that the saying in the text is a faithful saying. But farther,

The Apostle, in speaking of this saying, describes it as being not only a *faithful* saying, but one "*worthy of all acceptation.*" This may point, in the first place, at the *way* in which it should be received. It is worthy of all acceptation, worthy of being received with all possible gratitude and joy. Its vast importance claims for it this reception. How *ought* the tidings of salvation to be received by perishing sinners? When they hear of the Son of GOD coming down from heaven to save them, must they not be filled with deep and admiring thoughts of his loving-kindness and compassion? Can they be told of this stupendous instance of his love, and not cry out with the pious Psalmist, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him; and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"* When

* Psalm viii. 4.

they think of the blessings, which this SAVIOUR brings to them; of "the wrath to come," from which he offers to deliver them; of the eternal glory, to which he designs to raise them: must they not deem the tidings in the text to be "glad tidings of great joy?" Can they listen to them without being ready to cry out, with the Prophet, "Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O mountains; for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon the afflicted?"*

But the words in the text point not only at the *way* in which this report should be received, but at the *persons* by whom it should be received. It is worthy of *all* acceptation, of *general*, of *universal* acceptation. It is worthy of *all* men to be received. For all men are sinners, and stand in need of being saved; and can be saved in no other way than in that pointed out in the text. All then are concerned in this report. All *must* accept it or perish. On the contrary, all *may* accept it and live. The salvation offered in the Gospel is offered to all. JESUS CHRIST came to save sinners; *all* sinners who are willing to be saved by Him. He shuts out none, but those who by unbelief shut out themselves. He com-

* Isaiah, xlix. 13.

manded his gospel to be preached "to *every* creature;" He invites "*all* who labour and are heavy laden to come to him for rest:" and he promises that "those who come to him, he will in no wise cast out."*

In applying this subject, my brethren, let me put you in remembrance, that "to you are the words of this salvation sent." This report, which has come into all the world, has reached your ears. "JESUS CHRIST has come into the world to save sinners," to save *you;* to deliver you from the punishment and misery which your sins have deserved, and to bring you to everlasting life and glory. How does the report affect you? How do you receive it? Do you count it worthy of all acceptation? Do you receive it with gratitude and joy? Or are these tidings of salvation heard by you with indifference? Do they stir up in you no lively feelings, no grateful sense of the mercy vouchsafed to you? Does every trifling worldly thing lay hold of your mind, and interest your heart, while the saying in the text is listened to without pleasure or interest? If this last be the case, whence does it arise? From what cause can it happen, that you are thus unmoved at these

* Mark, xvi. 15.—Matt. xi. 28.—John, vi. 37.

important tidings? It is because you do not feel the importance of them; because you are alive to the things of the body and of the world, but really dead to the concerns of the soul and of eternity. Were you sick, you would listen with joy to the report of a remedy. Were you in prison, you would hear with transport of a deliverance. Were you in distress, you would welcome with delight the tidings of relief. Because in all these instances you would *feel* your wants. You would *feel* the misery of sickness, of imprisonment, or of poverty. But the misery of sin you feel not: therefore it is, that you are not suitably touched with the glorious tidings, "that CHRIST JESUS is come into the world to save sinners." O may it not be thus always with you! May you be awakened to a sense of your spiritual danger! May you now know indeed that you are sinners, and feel the need which you have of being saved.

To such as already do feel this need: whose consciences are alarmed; whose eyes are opened to see their danger; whose souls are anxiously searching for some way of deliverance from the wrath to come: to such persons how acceptable must be the saying in the text! It discovers to them the very thing which they are wishing to find. It

points out to them that salvation, which they are anxiously seeking. It makes known to them a Saviour, mighty to save, sufficient for all their wants, able and willing to save them to the uttermost. My brethren, if such be your case, take the comfort of these glorious tidings. They are intended for your comfort. Can you scarcely believe the report of mercy so rich, so free, so seasonable? It is a faithful saying. "He is faithful who has promised." Come unto this Saviour, and you shall find rest unto your souls. Your sins, though many, shall be forgiven. "Be they red like crimson, they shall be as wool." You shall be delivered from the wrath to come. You shall be saved with an everlasting salvation.

SERMON IX.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

JOHN, iii. 14, 15.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the Wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have eternal life.

IT is of great importance to us to have a right knowledge of the way of salvation. For without knowing the way, how can we be saved by it? Whatever, then, helps to explain this matter, should be highly prized by us. Now in the text we have an explanation of it, to which no objection can be made, and than which no better can be given: for it is the one, of which Jesus Christ himself made use. He was instructing Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, in the great truths and doctrines of the gospel: when, among other things, he says, that

" as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish but have eternal life."

In these words our Saviour, who here calls himself "the Son of Man," plainly declares two things: first, that there was a necessity for his being lifted up: and, secondly, that his being lifted up would in some respects resemble the lifting up of the serpent by Moses in the Wilderness. It shall be my endeavour in this discourse,

I. To explain these two things declared by our LORD.

II. To show what particulars we may gather from them concerning the way of salvation by the Gospel.

I. In explaining the two things here declared by our Lord, I shall take them in the order in which they are stated in the text, and shall consider,

1. In what respects the lifting up of Christ resembled the lifting up of the serpent in the Wilderness.

We have an account of the remarkable event here mentioned in the twenty-first chapter of the book of Numbers. The people of Israel, by their unbelief and murmuring, had displeased God, and provoked him to manifest his wrath. As a judgement on

their sin, he sent fiery serpents among them, which bit the people; and no cure for the bite being found, great numbers died. But as it had been on other occasions, so it was now. In their trouble they sought the Lord. Terrified at the judgement which was fallen on them, they came to Moses, confessed their guilt, and besought him to intercede for them with God. "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee. Pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us." Moses, at their request, besought the Lord, and the Lord heard his prayer. In this instance, however, as it often happens in others, he did not grant the very thing which was asked: nor give relief in the exact way which the people had pointed out. He did not immediately take away the serpents from them: but he made known a way, in which those who were bitten, might be cured; at the same time that it would put their faith and obedience to a trial. The way was this. He commanded Moses to make a Serpent of Brass, and having set it on a high pole, to raise it up in the midst of the camp, that it might be seen by the whole congregation. To this Serpent, thus lifted up, the people were directed to look; while it was promised, that every one, who

was bitten, should, on looking at it, be cured. His deadly wound should be healed, and he should live. And thus it came to pass. As many as believed and obeyed the direction, were instantly healed. "If a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the Serpent of Brass, he lived." Such is a short account of the remarkable event mentioned in the text.

Now the lifting up of Christ resembled this lifting up of the serpent, in that he was really lifted up in like manner. *As* the serpent was lifted up, "*even so*" was the Son of Man lifted up: for he was lifted up upon the cross. When nailed to the accursed tree, and there set forth as a spectacle to the whole world, he aptly resembled the Serpent of Brass fastened to the pole, and raised up in sight of the whole congregation, And it is in the same way that Christ speaks of his death in another place, when he says, and "I, if I *be lifted up* from the earth, will draw all men unto me," when it is expressly added, "this he said, signifying what death he should die." *

But it is not in this respect only that the resemblance of which we speak, is to be found. There is another still more

* John, xii. 32, 33.

important to be noticed. The lifting up of Christ on the cross resembled the lifting up of the Serpent by Moses *in the end and purposes* for which it was done. Why was the Serpent of Brass lifted up? That the Israelites by looking to it, might be healed of their deadly wounds. "*Even so*" Christ was lifted up, that sinners, by looking to him, may be saved. Sinners are in a far worse state than the Israelites were when bitten by the fiery serpents. For the bite of the serpents brought with it only the death of the body; but sin brings with it also the death of the soul, Sin is a dreadful disease which infects and corrupts the whole man. The sinner "has no health in him;" and is in danger of dying eternally: nay, if left to himself, he *must* die eternally; for his disease is naturally incurable. He is no more able to find a cure for his sin, than the Israelites were to heal the serpent's bite. But as in the one case so in the other, GOD has furnished a remedy. As he suffered not the Israelites to perish without opening to them a way of escape; so neither does he suffer sinners to be lost without making known to them a way of salvation. "As the Serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, *even so*," in a like manner, and with a like design, "was the Son of Man lifted up, that

whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have eternal life."

We see, then, in what respects these two events resemble each other. We consider,

2. What *necessity* there was that the Son of Man should thus be lifted up.

Christ himself declares that there was a necessity. He says, "the Son of Man *must* be lifted up." Whence did this necessity arise?

In the first place, without being lifted up, he could not fulfil the Scriptures concerning himself. They all foretold his sufferings and death. The types, the shadows, the sacrifices of the law, the predictions of the prophets, all agreed in saying that Christ should be lifted up. "They spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."* That Christ had this reason in his mind, when he declared the necessity of his being crucified, we can have little doubt. For he expressly reminded the apostles, "how it was *written* of the Son of Man, that he *must* suffer many things, and be set at nought:" while on another occasion he gives it as his reason for not praying to his Father to save him from suffering; "but how then shall the *Scriptures* be fulfilled,

* Luke, xix. 31.

that thus it *must* be?"* Thus again, after he was risen from the dead, having appeared unto two of his disciples, and reproved them for slowness of heart to believe all that the prophets had written, he asks, "*ought* not Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?" And then to show what he meant by the word *ought*, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."† Without fulfilling these things, he could not be the person of whom Moses and the prophets had spoken: and since they with one voice had said, that Christ should suffer, it was *necessary* in order to his being the Christ, that he should suffer. In this sense he *must* be lifted up.

But there is another and a far deeper sense, in which these words are to be understood. There was a still stronger necessity for the Son of Man being "lifted up." His sufferings and death were necessary to the accomplishment of that great and gracious work, which he had come from heaven to perform. This work was to save sinners. Now consider what stands in the way of their salvation. They have broken

* Mark, ix. 12.—Matthew, xxvi. 54.
† Luke, xxiv. 26, 27.

God's holy law, and have incurred the awe-ful punishment which follows disobedience. Though God may be disposed to pity and spare them; yet his holiness demands their destruction. Before he can show mercy towards them, some satisfaction must be made to his infinite justice; some sacrifice must be found of sufficient value to atone for their guilt, and glorify his law. But how shall such a satisfaction be made? Sinners could never make it. Where shall such a sacrifice be found? Sinners could never find it. What they, however, could never have done for themselves, the Son of God offered to do for them. He offered in his own person to make satisfaction for them, by giving himself as a sacrifice for their sins. To this end he humbled himself to become the Son of Man, that so in the likeness of sinful flesh, he might suffer and die for sinners. Here then we again see the necessity mentioned in the text. The Son of Man *must* be lifted up. He must hang, and bleed, and die on the cross, because there only it was that he could procure salvation for sinners; because there only it was, even on the cross, that by pouring out his soul unto death, he could make the full oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, without which no one sin could

even on the cross, that, by his precious blood-shedding, he could purchase the gift of the Holy Ghost, without which no one sinner could ever be renewed and sanctified; because there only it was, even on the cross, that he could triumph over the powers of darkness, could destroy death, and "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," and could open a new and living way into the kingdom of heaven.

Having thus explained the two things declared by our Lord in the text, I shall endeavour,

II. To show what particulars we may gather from them, concerning the way of salvation by the Gospel.

1. We may observe, that in order to be saved, we must look to Jesus Christ. He is lifted up to this very end, that we may look to him and be saved. Nor can we be saved without looking to him. It is plain that a remedy against an evil can be of no avail unless it be used. A medicine will not lessen the violence of a disorder unless it be taken. Food cannot satisfy the cravings of hunger unless it be eaten. Thus it was with the remedy provided for the wounded Israelites. It was not enough that the serpent of brass was lifted up. The remedy thus provided

must be used and applied, and, as it were, brought home by every one to his own case. Every Israelite who would be healed must *look* on the serpent. He must *turn his eyes* upon it, in the hope and expectation of a cure. And thus it is with the salvation provided for sinners. It is not enough that it has been provided. It is not enough that Christ has been crucified, and has thereby offered a sufficient sacrifice for sin. Sinners must secure to themselves an interest in that sacrifice. They must make the blessings purchased by it their own. And how can they do this? By *looking* to the Son of Man thus lifted up: by *turning their eyes* upon the cross, in the hope and expectation of being saved by it from sin. This is the direction which Christ has expressly given for applying to ourselves the benefits of his death; "*look unto me, and be ye saved!*"* But how are we to understand this direction? What is meant by our *looking* unto Jesus Christ, and by *turning our eyes* upon the cross? It is plain that sinners cannot look on Jesus Christ in the same manner as the Israelites looked on the serpent of brass, that is, with their bodily eyes. This is impossible. It is the eye of the soul, which is here meant. The looking spoken of is the

* Isaiah, xiv. 22.

looking of the heart. When the soul is turned towards Jesus Christ, casting all its hope of being saved on the sacrifice which he has made for sin, and humbly praying to be made partaker of the benefits purchased by that sacrifice, then may it be truly said to look to Jesus Christ. And what in fact is this, but that very *believing* on Christ, that *faith* in Him, which the Scriptures so constantly set forth, as the only way of procuring an interest in his precious blood-shedding? "*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "By him all that *believe* are justified from all things." "He that *believeth* on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that *believeth not on the* Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him." "By grace are ye saved through *faith.*"* To which passages of Scripture let us add only the words of the text, "the Son of Man must be lifted up, that whosoever *believeth* in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

2. We may observe that this way of saving sinners by faith in Jesus Christ, is a way altogether of God's providing. To have set up the brazen serpent for the purpose of healing the wounds of the people, was a way of giving relief which would never have

* Acts, xvi. 31.—xiii. 39.—John, iii. 36.—Ephes. ii. 1.

entered into the heart of man: a way, which, if it had entered into his heart, he could never have made effectual.' It was altogether of God. The wisdom of God planned the way, and prescribed the means. His power alone made those things successful. Thus it is with the salvation of the Gospel. No man could ever have planned it. It was far above out of his thoughts. It was utterly beyond his power to have accomplished it. God alone could have planned a way, and provided a sacrifice. He alone could say what satisfaction he required for our sins, and in what way he could be reconciled to his guilty creatures. This way he has been pleased in mercy to make known to us. He has told us, that it is the way of faith in Jesus Christ, and that "whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have eternal life." What then have we to do, my brethren, but thankfully to use the remedy thus provided for us? It is a remedy, indeed, which may seem strange to our natural ideas, a remedy which we may be tempted to look upon as weak, and insufficient, and unlikely to succeed. But might not the Israelites on the same ground have objected to the remedy provided for them? Might not they have called it weak, and insufficient, and unlikely to succeed, and have

given, this as a reason for not making trial of it? Yet we have seen in their case how false and impious such reasonings would have been. Be assured, that they will be equally false and impious in our case. In answer to every objection of this kind, let us remember that the way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ is the way of GOD'S providing? It is his own appointment for the saving of our souls. Thoroughly persuaded of his wisdom, power, and truth, let us rely, with full assurance on his word. Is Christ "the Lamb of God;" the Lamb whom God himself hath provided for a burnt offering? Let us by faith *behold* this Lamb. Has "God set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, for the remisson of sins?" Let us *look* to him and be saved.

The necessity of doing this will more strongly appear from observing,

3. That this way of salvation by faith in JESUS CHRIST is the only way. "Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is JESUS CHRIST." "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*," but the name of JESUS CHRIST. There is

* 1 Cor. iii. 11. — Acts, iv. 12.

no way of coming unto the Father, but by Jesus Christ.* What then must become of those who build not on this foundation, who trust not in this name, who come not by this way? Consider what would have become of the wounded Israelites, had they refused to make use of the remedy provided for them? When bidden to look at the Brazen Serpent for a cure, had they said, 'No: we will try some other means of procuring relief. We will go to the physicians. We will have recourse to medicines. We will see if we cannot heal ourselves:' what must have been the consequence? They would certainly have died. For the remedy which they would have refused to try, was the *only* one which could heal their wound. Such then exactly is the case with the salvation provided by the Gospel. It is the only salvation from sin. Those who from pride, or perverseness, or negligence, refuse to have recourse to it, must perish. "He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life."†

4. We may observe that this way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ is *free and open to all.* None are shut out from it, but those who shut out themselves. It is a

* John, xiv. 6. † 1 John, v. 12.

remedy provided for all who are willing to make use of it. Moses was directed to tell the Israelites, when he set up the brazen serpent, that "*every one*, who was bitten, when he looked upon it, should live." No exceptions were made. All were invited to share the blessings. And all who sought a cure in the appointed way obtained it. No stage, no state of the disorder, made any difference. "It came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten *any* man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." Thus it is with the salvation of the Gospel. It is expressly said in the text, "the Son of Man shall be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." Take notice of that word "whosoever." It includes all persons of all descriptions. Every child of Adam, whether high or low, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, young or old, *whosoever* he may be; yet if he believe on Jesus Christ, he shall live. Let him look with a penitent sorrow, and a believing trust, to this great sacrifice for the sin of the world, and he "shall not perish, but shall have eternal life."

What comfortable words, what tidings of great joy are these to all, who know and feel themselves to be sinners! How ought

every heart among us to leap for joy! for we are all sinners. Sin has given to every one of us a dreadful wound, which no art, nor wisdom, nor labour of our own can heal. Jesus Christ alone can heal it: and it is only by looking to him, that we can obtain a cure. O then look to him for health and salvation! Though you may fear that you are far off from him; though you can, as it were, but dimly see him; though your faith be weak, your ignorance great, your hope wavering, yet still *look* to him. Make him your all in all. See him crucified, bleeding, dying for your sins; and while you grieve with a godly sorrow for your transgressions, still hope in his mercy, and trust with humble confidence to the sufficiency of his sacrifice in your behalf.

On the other hand, my brethren, remember, that the faith of the Gospel is a sanctifying faith. It is a faith which makes holy all who have it. You cannot believe in Christ, and yet remain unholy. The salvation of the Gospel is a salvation *from* sin. Now a man cannot be saved *from* sin while he serves it, and lives in it. You would not have said, that the Israelite was cured of the serpent's bite, while the poison still raged in his veins. Neither are you saved from sin, if sin still reign in you. Be not

deceived. Are you obeying in sin any of the lusts thereof? In this case you are no true believer in Christ. You are not *really* looking to him. You may have heard of him; but you have never seen him by faith. He is lifted up, but you behold him not. Your hope at present is not the hope of the Gospel. It is not the hope by which we are saved; "for every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure."*

* 1 John, iii. 3.

SERMON X.

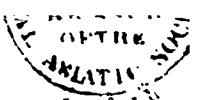
JESUS CHRIST THE AUTHOR OF ETERNAL SALVATION.

HEBREWS, v. 9.

And being made perfect, he became the Author of Eternal Salvation, unto all them that obey him.

IF there be one truth more clearly laid down in the Bible than another, it is this;—that men cannot draw nigh to GOD but through a Mediator, that is, through the means of some person, who may stand between them and GOD, and may make up the breach between them. The whole Jewish religion taught this truth in the plainest manner. The appointment and office of the High Priest especially showed it forth. He was the appointed Mediator between GOD and the people. By Him, the sacrifices which they brought were offered up. It was his ever be remitted: because there only it was,

office to go alone into the Most Holy place, which represented heaven, bearing the blood of the sacrifices in behalf of the people. It was his office to burn incense every morning and evening in the Holy place, by which acts his prayers and intercessions for the people were signified. It was his office to bless the congregation in the name of the LORD. But there was one thing, which showed that in discharging all these parts of his office, he was only a *typical* Mediator, that is, that he only represented some other person, who was the true and real Mediator. It was this. The High Priest, while he offered up sacrifices for the sins of the people, offered them up also for himself, for his own sins. It was therefore plain, that there could be no real power in his mediation, seeing that he himself also stood in need of a mediator, by whom he might draw near to GOD, and be himself accepted. Need we be told, my brethren, that this *one only true* Mediator, whom the High Priest represented, to whom all the ceremonies of the Jewish religion pointed, was Jesus Christ? He is the real, great High Priest of the Church; through whom alone sinners can draw nigh to GOD, and find acceptance with Him. It is this High Priest of whom the Apostle speaks in the text. In the former part of



the chapter he had been showing what the priest's office was, and how greatly the priesthood of CHRIST excelled that of Aaron, when he comes to this conclusion, "being made perfect, he became the Author of Eternal Salvation unto all them that obey him." When the Apostle speaks of CHRIST's being *made perfect*, he means as to his office. He was fully fitted for the discharge of it. Unlike to the High Priests under the Law, who were only his representatives, he was in every point fitted to become a sufficient Mediator. He needed not, as they needed, to offer sacrifices for Himself; for he had no sin which wanted an atonement. He did not offer, as they offered, "the same sacrifices continually;" but he offered one sacrifice for sin, even the sacrifice of Himself. He did not enter, as they entered, merely "into the Holy places made with hands, but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of GOD for us." Thus he "became the Author of Eternal Salvation unto all them that obey him."

In discoursing farther on this passage, I shall consider three particulars, which it offers to our notice.

I. The Office which CHRIST has undertaken.

II. His Fitness for discharging it.

III. The Persons to whom the benefit of it reaches.

I. The Office of Christ. "He is the Author of Eternal Salvation." Man is born for eternity. Every man, who is born into the world, has an immortal soul; which will be happy or miserable for ever. Death puts an end to his natural life, but not to his being. There is a state of bliss or torment, in which after this life he must be fixed for ever. "The wicked shall be turned into hell:" and "the righteous shall go into life eternal*:"—But who among us, my brethren, can hope to go into life eternal? We are none of us righteous. Nay, the Scriptures tell us, that there is not a righteous man upon earth: "There is none righteous, no not one!"† We are all sinners. We were born in sin. We have lived in sin. We have committed many sins: and one sin is enough to ruin the soul for ever. "The wages of sin is death!"‡ an everlasting separation from God and happiness.—Such, in fact, is the state of all men from the time of Adam's Fall. They have immortal souls;

* Psalm ix. 17.—Matt. xxv. 46.
† Rom. iii. 10. ‡ Rom. vi. 23.

but being by nature and by practice sinners, they have lost all title to heaven, all fitness for it; they serve their lusts, obey the Devil, and are condemned to everlasting punishment, as children of wrath, and enemies to God. Desperate, however, as our case appears to be, there is a remedy proposed. JESUS CHRIST has undertaken to deliver us out of this miserable condition. He has undertaken to give back to us a title to heaven and a fitness for it. He has undertaken to save us from the dominion of sin, from the power of the Devil, from the pains of hell. He has undertaken to make us the children of GOD, and heirs of eternal glory. This is His Office, of which we are here speaking, and in respect of which he is called "the Author of Eternal Salvation." This great and glorious change from a state of wrath and misery to a state of grace and happiness, which may justly be called "Eternal Salvation," is the work of JESUS CHRIST. He begins it. He carries it on. He completes it. He came down from Heaven that He might procure this salvation for us: for "he came into the world that he might save sinners." If he had not come, there could have been no salvation for us. Therefore it is said, "GOD hath given to us

eternal life: and this life is *in his Son.*"— "Through HIM we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." — "No man cometh unto the Father, but by HIM." — He is "the good Shepherd," who, speaking of his sheep, says, "*I give* unto them eternal life."* But it is especially as our High Priest that we are led in the text to look to JESUS CHRIST. This office he bears for us. As our High Priest he has undertaken to offer a sufficient sacrifice for our sins, and to make effectual intercession in our behalf: and thus fully to discharge the office of Mediator between GOD and us. Let us next consider,

II. His Fitness for discharging this Office.

However willingly CHRIST might have undertaken to become our High Priest and Mediator with the Father, yet if He had not been fully fitted to discharge his office, his undertaking, it would have profited us nothing. It is on his *fitness* for being our High Priest that our trust in him is laid. And, blessed be GOD! we have full proof of his sufficiency for this purpose. It was in consequence of his being *made perfect*, perfectly fitted for his office, that He became the Author of Eternal Salvation.

* 1 John, v. 13. — Ephes. ii. 18. — John, xiv. 6. — John, x. 28.

1. He was appointed of GOD to be our High Priest. This appointment was absolutely necessary to make him duly fitted for the discharge of his office. Without it we could have had no certainty, that GOD would accept his mediation. No persons under the Jewish law could take to themselves the Priesthood, and thus become typical Mediators. The High Priest was especially appointed by God; by which we are taught, that no High Priest could avail unless appointed by him. "No man taketh that honour unto himself, but he that is called of God," as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest, but He that said unto him, "Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten Thee:" as he saith also in another place, "Thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec."* Thus the prophet Isaiah, speaking in the person of Christ, says, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek†;" which *anointing* afterwards actually took place, when the Heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit in the shape of a dove came down upon the head of JESUS, and thus, as it were, consecrated

* Hebrews, v. 4, 5, 6. — Psalm ii. 7. — cx. 4.
† Isaiah, lxi. 1.

him to the office of the Priesthood; while a voice from heaven proclaimed the Father's assent to the consecration, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*

2. He had wherewith to offer for the sins of the people. This formed a necessary part of the Priest's office. The Priests under the law daily offered sacrifices for the sins of the people. There was, however, nothing in their sacrifices which could have any real value. The blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin; "for *then*," asks the Apostle, "would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged, should have had no more conscience of sins." The very repetition of the sacrifices showed that they could "never make the comers thereunto perfect."† But it is not so with our Great High Priest. "He by one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."‡ He had an available sacrifice to offer; the sacrifice of himself. He shed his own blood to make atonement for sinners; that blood which "cleanseth from all sin." The sufferings of the Son of God in human nature formed an acceptable, a sufficient sacrifice. They showed forth the heinousness of sin,

* Matt. iii. 17.
† Hebrews, x. 1, 2.
‡ Hebrews, x. 14.

the justice and holiness of GOD, the honour which he put on his law, his rich mercy, and infinite wisdom. With the sacrifice, therefore, of Jesus, God was well pleased. It was to him "a sacrifice for a sweet-smelling savour*," because by this sacrifice the divine perfections were honoured and glorified. When CHRIST, therefore, undertook to be our High Priest, He did not undertake more than he was able to perform. He was able "to make reconciliation for iniquity;" to offer such a sacrifice for sin, as would take it away; and to deliver sinners from the punishment due to them, by taking it upon himself. Thus was "the Captain of our salvation made perfect through suffering." †

3. CHRIST is able effectually to intercede for his people. Intercession, or praying in behalf of the people, was another important part of the Priest's office. Thus CHRIST is not only the propitiation for our sins, but "our Advocate," that is to say, our Intercessor, "with the Father." ‡ CHRIST, though He died once for sins, could not be holden of death. Having by death fully satisfied the demands of the law, He speedily rose from the dead, and went up into Heaven, there to

* Ephes. v. 2. † Hebrews, ii. 10.
‡ 1 John, ii. 3.

become our Intercessor. And there are two grounds, on which we may look with confidence to Him in this character. First, in that "He *ever liveth* to make intercession for us." * His Priesthood is an unchangeable Priesthood, He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." † Secondly, in that he has something available to plead in our behalf, even the infinite merits of his own sufferings. This is a plea which will always prevail for every sinner, in whose favour it is urged. — And thus CHRIST is fully qualified to intercede for his people.

CHRIST is thoroughly and personally acquainted with the wants and the weaknesses of those, whose cause he has undertaken. The High Priest under the law was taken from among men, that thus he might "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, for that he himself also was compassed with infirmity." ‡ In this respect also CHRIST is fitted for his important office. Though he was the Most High GOD, yet he humbled himself, and took upon him our flesh, with all its feelings, weaknesses, and infirmities, sin alone excepted. He has thus shown himself as possessing an intimate, an experimental

* Hebrews, vii. 25. † Hebrews, xiii. 8.
‡ Hebrews, v. 2.

knowledge of our nature. Having been "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," he manifestly knows how to compassionate the afflicted. Having himself suffered in the flesh, he manifestly knows how to pity and relieve those that suffer. Were he only GOD, we might perhaps be tempted to think that he did not enter into our feelings, and so might distrust his compassion. But being also man, having lived, and suffered, and died as a man, we may rely on Him as "a merciful and faithful High Priest," who can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." — Therefore in this point also he is *made perfect.*

Lastly, He is not only a Priest, but a King. So was Melchisedec, after whose order Christ is a Priest. He was at once "King of Salem, and Priest of the Most High God." * Thus Christ in his office of Mediator joins the two offices of Priest and King. He is "a Priest upon his throne †," and it is this circumstance which makes his mediation complete and perfect. While he has every thing fitting and requisite for the discharge of the Priesthood, he has also "all power in heaven and in earth." "The government is upon his shoulders." ‡ What-

* Gen. xiv. 18. † Zech. vi. 13. ‡ Isaiah, ix. 6.

ever happens in nature and in providence is under his control. The gift of the Spirit itself is at his disposal. He is "King of kings, and Lord of lords;" and "shall reign" as Mediator, "till he hath put all enemies under his feet." * — Thus, in every respect being made perfect, he is "become the Author of Eternal Salvation."

Let us consider,

III. The Persons to whom the benefit of his mediation will reach.

Christ "died for all." He "tasted death for every man." † His mediation is sufficient for all. All are invited to share the benefits of it. But all will not be the better for it. Why so? Because all will not comply with the only condition on which the benefits can reach to them. Christ is "the Author of Eternal Salvation to all them," but to them only, "*who obey him.*" This obedience has respect to his whole mediatorial office. Those, who would be saved by him, must obey him as their Priest, and as their King. As their Priest they must humbly trust in his sacrifice and intercession, and place all their spiritual concerns in his hands. As their King they must submit to his government, and keep his commandments. They

* 1 Cor. xv. 25. † 2 Cor. v. 14.—Heb. ii. 9.

must not only "call him, Lord! Lord!" but must do the things which he says." It might be plainly shown, that they who do not thus obey Christ *cannot* be partakers of that Eternal Salvation, of which he is the Author. But it is enough for our present purpose to show, that they *will not* partake of them. We are expressly told, that those "who obey not the Gospel;" that is, who do not receive Jesus Christ as the propitiation for their sins, and their advocate with the Father, "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*;" while such as refuse to have Christ for their king, he himself thus decisively condemns. "Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me." †

Having thus considered the three things set before us in the text, let me now apply them to ourselves.

My brethren, you have every one of you an immortal soul; a soul, which must live for ever; a soul, which throughout eternity must be happy or miserable, must feel dreadful suffering, or enjoy inconceivable bliss. Can any enquiry then be of such importance

* 2 Thess. i. 8, 9. † Luke, ix. 17.

to you as this, What will become of your soul? Are you aware of the state into which sin has brought your soul? Do you know, do you consider, that by sin you have lost the happiness of heaven, and have incurred the misery of hell? It matters not in this respect, whether your sins be less or greater, be fewer or more, than those of others. They who have committed the greatest sins will receive the greatest punishment. But all sin is committed against a good and holy GOD, and is "exceeding sinful." You must compare yourselves not with one another, but with the law of God; which brings in every one of you as guilty, and, therefore, condemns every one of you to the punishment prepared for the enemies of GOD. — One way of escape, however, is open for you. You may yet be saved from the wrath to come. You may be delivered from the punishment of your sins; nay, more, you may yet enter into heaven, and enjoy everlasting happiness. There is One Person, who, as you have seen, has undertaken your cause: One who, beholding your lost condition, and being filled with love and pity for you, has taken upon himself to become your mediator, and to procure your salvation: One who, as you have also seen, is fully fitted for the office which he has undertaken; who has been

appointed to that office by GOD himself; who, "being GOD and man in one CHRIST," has made an all-sufficient sacrifice for your sins, by himself suffering in your stead. One, who is now entered into heaven, and there ever liveth to make intercession for you: One, who knows your infirmities, and is touched with tender compassion for them: One, who having all power, is "able to save to the uttermost, those who come unto GOD by him."

Such is your state. Such is the Mediator set before you. What course, my brethren, will you take? Would you save your precious soul, would you escape eternal misery, what can avail you, but thankfully to accept the offers of this Mediator? What can avail you, but to put your soul into the care of One, who is so able to take charge of it? —Recollect then what you must do in order to be saved by his mediation! You must *obey Him.* You must give to him *the first place* in your heart. He must *reign* within you. On no other condition will he be your Saviour, the Author *to you* of eternal salvation. You must become his willing servants, his obedient subjects. And is there any thing hard, any thing unreasonable, in this condition? "His commandments," in themselves, "are not grievous." On the contrary,

they are good and pleasant, and tend to the happiness of all who keep them. His yoke is an easy yoke. His service in fact is perfect freedom. Some master you must serve. If you serve not Christ, you are serving sin, the world, and the Devil. What will they do for you? Will they be the authors of eternal salvation? No; they will sink you in eternal ruin. This will be the wages of their service.—Besides, have any of these masters such a right to your obedience as Christ has? Have they made you out of nothing? Do they continue to you life and breath, and every comfort which you enjoy? Far otherwise. For all these blessings, for every thing which you have or hope for, you are indebted to Christ. He created, He preserves you. Nay more, He has redeemed you. He has bought you with a price. He has given a ransom for you, even his own precious blood, which was shed to purchase you to be to him a peculiar treasure. How then can you for a moment justify disobedience to him? Not to obey him is the foulest ingratitude, the basest unkindness, the most abominable wickedness, no less than the most unreasonable conduct, the most desperate folly.

May these considerations come home to the hearts of all! May the recollection of

those sufferings, by which our blessed Redeemer was perfected for his glorious office; of our sins, which caused those sufferings; of his love, which led him for our sakes to undergo them; powerfully constrain us all to yield ourselves to him, as our rightful Master, our Teacher, Priest, and King; to devote ourselves for ever to his service; to join ourselves to him, "in an everlasting covenant which shall not be forgotten!"

SERMON XI.

THE OFFICES AND GIFTS OF JESUS CHRIST.

ACTS, v. 31.

Him hath God exalted with his right Hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give Repentance to Israel, and Forgiveness of Sins.

ALL our religion must depend on our knowledge of JESUS CHRIST; of what he is in himself; and of what he has done for us. Without this knowledge we can have no just sense of our duties, nor any good hope of salvation. This knowledge, then, must be highly valued, and diligently sought by us. And in this view the words of the text are particularly deserving our attention. For they were spoken by St. Peter before the Jewish council, and contain a statement of those particulars, which he and the other apostles taught concerning JESUS CHRIST. "Him hath GOD exalted

with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." In discoursing on this passage, I propose,

I. To consider the truth which it teaches us concerning JESUS CHRIST.

II. To show what use we should make of these truths.

I. The general truth which we are here taught concerning JESUS CHRIST, is his *Exaltation*. That same JESUS, whom the Jews, with wicked hands, had crucified and slain, "HIM hath GOD exalted with his right hand." The Father, "having raised him from the dead, has set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." * But in this general truth we are led more particularly to consider two things.

1. The Offices to which JESUS is exalted.

2. The Gifts which he is exalted to bestow.

1. Of these *Offices* the first is that of *Prince*, which is the same with ruler or king. The Jews rejected the *authority* of JESUS. They would not have him to *reign* over them. They accused him as an enemy to Cæsar, for making himself a King. And, in contempt of taking this title to himself, there was written over his cross, "*Jesus the*

* Ephes. i. 20.

King of the Jews." But him hath GOD exalted to be a *King*. Vain were the opposition and malice of his enemies. "The heathen raged, and the people imagined a vain thing. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel together against the LORD, and against his Anointed." "But he that sitteth in the heavens laughed. The LORD had them in derision." "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." * The exaltation of Jesus to the mediatorial throne was the covenanted reward of his humiliation and sufferings. For this "joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame; and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of GOD;" "he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: *wherefore* GOD also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow." Having "made him both LORD and CHRIST," He "hath put all things under his feet;" He "hath given him to be head over all things to the church;" "hath committed all judgement unto him;" hath placed him "upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it and to

* Psalm ii. 1, 2. 4. 6.

establish it with judgement and with justice from henceforth even for ever."*

But JESUS is not only a king. He is exalted to be a *Saviour*, as well as a Prince. In this character also the Jews refused to receive him. They were looking for a worldly Saviour, who should set them free from the yoke of their worldly enemies. But Jesus is a *spiritual* Saviour, who delivers not only Jews but Gentiles also from "the wrath to come," from the yoke of sin and Satan. He was called Jesus, because he "should save his people from their sins."† For this purpose he came into the world, and was made man. For this purpose he died the cruel and shameful death on the cross. For this purpose he rose from the dead, and is "gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of GOD; angels, authorities, and powers being made subject to him."‡ From the first entrance of sin into the world, GOD had promised a *spiritual* Saviour, who should "bruise the Serpent's head." This promise he gradually made clearer by types and prophecies. Till at length, "when the fulness of the time was come, he sent forth his Son,

* Hebrews, xii.—Philip. ii. 8, 9, 10.—Acts, ii. 36. 1 Cor. xv. 27.—Ephes. i. 22.—John, v. 25.—Isaiah, ix. 7.

† Matt. i. 24.

‡ 1 Peter, iii. 22.

made of a woman:" and having set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, "exalted him with his right hand to be a Saviour."* To this Saviour he bids us look. In this Saviour he bids us trust. This Saviour he commands us to hear. He assures us that "there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of JESUS CHRIST." He assures us, that looking unto JESUS with a penitent and believing heart, we shall be saved. "Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded." "This is the will of the Father, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life."†

Such are the offices to which JESUS is exalted. We consider,

2. The *Gifts* which he is exalted to bestow.

These gifts are two, Repentance and Forgiveness of Sins. "Him hath GOD exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, *for to give Repentance* to Israel, and *Forgiveness of Sins.*"

Repentance, in the language of Scrip-

* Gal. iv. 4.—Rom. iii. 25.
† 1 Peter, ii. 6.—John, vi. 40.

ture, is a change of heart, producing a change of conduct. The man who truly repents, is one, who has far different views of sin, from those which he once had. He once thought lightly of it. But he now sees it to be evil, as bringing ruin on his soul: nay more, he sees it to be "exceeding sinful," as committed against a good and holy GOD. And this view of it fills him with penitent sorrow, shame, and self-abhorrence. He no longer tries or wishes to hide his sins from GOD. He confesses them with unfeigned humiliation; he condemns himself on account of them; he hates and forsakes them. His language is, "Behold I am vile. I abhor myself: and I repent in dust and ashes."* Such were the feelings of the Publican, when, standing afar off, he would not lift so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, "GOD be merciful to me a sinner."† Such were the feelings of the Corinthians, whose repentance St. Paul describes in these expressive words: "For behold this self-same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you; yea, what clearing of yourselves; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what

* Job, xl. 4.; xlii. 6. † Luke, xviii. 13.

revenge! In all things, ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter." *

This penitent state of mind, then, is one of those *Gifts*, which Jesus is exalted to bestow. By his spirit he convinces the soul of sin; takes away "the heart of stone," the hard, unfeeling, impenitent heart; and produces that "godly sorrow," which "worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of." Thus on the day of Pentecost, he gave repentance to three thousand sinners at once, when at the preaching of St. Peter, they "were *pricked in their heart*, and said unto him and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"† Thus also Jesus *gave* repentance to the persecuting Paul, when, "trembling and astonished," he cried in words which showed the penitent feelings of his heart, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"‡

But Jesus gives not repentance only, but also *forgiveness of sins*. Sin brings punishment. The offender against God's law, like the offender against man's law, becomes subject to the penalty denounced against transgression. The sinner can do nothing to escape this penalty. He cannot undo his sin; he cannot atone for his

* 2 Cor. vii. 11. † Acts, ii. 37. ‡ Acts, ix. 6.

offence. Nothing remains to him, "but a certain fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."* — But the offender may be pardoned. By an act of mercy his guilt may be done away. The prisoner may be set free; and thus may be restored to liberty, to favour, and to his forfeited privileges.

Such is forgiveness of sin; and such also is the gift which JESUS is exalted to bestow. He has purchased it for us with his own blood. By the one sacrifice of himself, once offered, he made a perfect satisfaction for the sins of the world. In virtue of this sacrifice he "had power on earth to forgive sins."† He has the same power in heaven. He pardons sinners. He remits the penalty due to their offences. He says to the prisoner, "Go forth;" to the criminal under condemnation, "Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee."‡

Such are the truths which the text teaches us concerning JESUS CHRIST. I go on,

II. To show what use we should make of these truths.

* Heb. x. 27. † Matt. ix. 26.
‡ Isaiah, xlix. 9.—Matt. ix. 2.

1. Let us hence learn, what should be our conduct towards JESUS CHRIST.

Has God exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour? Let us receive him in these offices. Let us exalt him also. As our King, let us obey and honour him. Let us not merely bend the knee, nor bow the head at his name. Let us not merely call him "Lord, Lord," and render to him a formal, lifeless service. But let us submit our hearts to him; bring in subjection to his authority our wills, our tempers, our affections; and worship him in spirit, and in truth. As a Saviour, let us believe and trust in him. Let us look to him only for salvation. Let us count all our own works as loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS our LORD. Let us rely solely on his merits for pardon, holiness, and eternal life. By this conduct only can we please GOD, or save our souls: to refuse to have CHRIST for *our King* is direct rebellion against the Majesty of heaven. To reject him as *our Saviour*, is to seal our own destruction: for "there is salvation in no other."

Nor let us foolishly and wickedly attempt to separate these offices of Jesus Christ; to receive him in one, and to reject him in

the other. Thus it is that numbers dishonour Christ and ruin their souls.

Some profess to take him for their King, but do not accept him for their Saviour. They call themselves by his name: say that they are his subjects; and pretend to be governed by his laws: but on *what foundation* are they building their hopes of acceptance with God? On Jesus alone? No. On something in themselves. On their own works, merits, or services. They dream that they shall be saved, because their tempers are good, or their lives free from gross offences; because they are punctual in their dealings, or kind to their neighbours; because they are not so bad as many others; or because they attend on the ordinances of religion. These things are their Saviours. On these things *they* depend for salvation. But, my brethren, let me urge it on you as a truth never to be forgotten, that Christ is the only Saviour. Whatever may be that foundation on which you attempt to build, if it be not Christ, it is worthless and unsound. Neither can you join any other foundation with him. If asked to give a reason of the hope which is in you, the language of your lips, the language of your heart, must be, "Christ is all."

But there are others who act a contrary part; who call Jesus, Lord, but "in works deny him;" who take him for their Saviour, but do not obey him as their King. Gladly would they be saved by him from punishment: but they cast his words behind them. They submit not to his holy law. Some earthly idol, some fleshly lust, some unmortified sin is suffered to reign in their heart. Look at their lives: in their dealings with others they betray as selfish and worldly a spirit as the most ungodly characters. — Go into their company. Their conversation is censorious and uncharitable. — Follow them into their families. Here they indulge ungovernable tempers; neglect the religious education of their children: and employ their servants without any regard to their spiritual instruction. Are they in affliction? Discontented and repining they murmur at the will of God; and, at the best, submit only because they *must*. Are they in prosperity? They show nothing of that meekness, moderation, humility, self-denial, and munificence, which Christianity requires. In short, Christ has not the heart. He does not rule within: and where this is the case, all professions of faith in him are vain and empty. If he be not a king, he is not a

Saviour. He is "the Author of Eternal Salvation to all them," but to them only, "who obey him." "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." *

2. We may learn from the text, what things are necessary to our salvation. Is Jesus exalted to give repentance and forgiveness of sins? These we may be assured are the very things of which we stand in need. If they were not necessary to us, Jesus would not have been exalted to bestow them. Let us not suppose, then, that we can be saved without them. Unless our sins be pardoned, we can never be admitted into heaven. Unless our hearts be changed and made new, we can never be fitted for that holy and glorious place. Nor let us suppose that these things can ever be separated. The gifts which Jesus bestows, like the offices to which he is exalted, cannot be parted from each other. The Scriptures constantly represent them as inseparably joined together.

On the one hand, the necessity of repentance in order to forgiveness, is strongly enforced. John, the forerunner of Christ, "preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins," saying, "Repent ye,

* Heb. v. 9. — Rom. viii. 9.

for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* When Jesus himself came, he proclaimed the same truth, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel."† In the charge which he gave to his apostles after he was risen from the dead, he told them "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations."‡ And accordingly it is to this effect that we find his apostles afterwards preaching, "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." "Repent ye, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."§

On the other hand, forgiveness of sins is no less constantly described as closely following repentance. All the texts already brought imply this point: others more directly prove it. "The Lord looketh upon men; and if any say, I have sinned and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, he will deliver his soul from going into the pit." "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall find mercy." "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."‖ No sooner did David repent of his sin, saying, "I have sinned

* Mark, i. 4. — Matt. iii. 2. † Matt. i. 15.
‡ Luke, xxiv. 47. § Acts, ii. 30. — iii. 19. ‖ John, i. 9.

against the Lord," than the prophet was commissioned to say unto him, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin."* No sooner did God see Ephraim bemoaning himself on account of his transgressions, than he said, "I will surely have mercy upon him."†

These passages plainly prove the point in question. In reading them, however, let us not fall into a mistake. While we see that repentance and forgiveness of sin are closely joined together, let us not suppose that our sins will be forgiven, *because* we repent of them. Let us not suppose that repentance is the prevailing, the procuring, the meritorious cause of our forgiveness. This would be to put repentance in the place of Christ. It is His blood alone "through which we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."‡ If our sins be pardoned, it is *because* Christ died for us. His death alone is the price of our pardon; and by faith alone do we obtain an interest in this blessing. None, however, but the truly penitent, are fitted to receive and value it. None therefore but the truly penitent will ever really partake of it.— Hence springs the necessity of repentance in order to forgiveness. Hence Christ has said, "Except ye repent ye shall all perish§;"

* 2 Sam. xii. 13. † Jer. xxxi. 20.
‡ Ephes. i. 7. § Luke, xiii. 3. 5.

while He, who has wrought in us a godly sorrow for our sins, will plead his own merits in our behalf: and will not suffer us to perish under the unpardoned guilt of those transgressions, which he himself has taught us to hate and to forsake.

3. We may farther learn from the text, how these needful blessings are to be procured. Jesus Christ is exalted to bestow them. Repentance and forgiveness are His Gifts: Gifts, which he offers to all, and which he is able and willing to bestow on all. What glad tidings of great joy are these to a world of perishing sinners! — With what transports of gratitude should we receive and welcome them! What consolation do they furnish to every trembling and afflicted soul, which feels its own unworthiness, and is weighed down with the thoughts of its own depravity and guilt! The first and most earnest wish of a soul thus humbled and distressed is this, 'Would 'that my sins were pardoned! "Mine 'iniquities are gone over my head; as a 'heavy burden, they are too heavy for me." 'I owe ten thousand talents. I have no-'thing to pay. O that there might be for-'giveness with GOD for me!' Know then that there *is* forgiveness with GOD for you. Pardon; that pardon, which you so greatly

need, and for which you so anxiously long, is the very Gift which Jesus offers to you. He has purchased it for you. He is exalted to bestow it. He is ready freely to bestow it on *you*. He cries, ‘ “ Come unto me, ‘ all ye that labour and are heavy laden, ‘ and I will give you rest.” “ I have ‘ blotted out as a thick cloud your transgres- ‘ sions, and as a cloud your sins.” “ Your ‘ sins and your iniquities will I remember ‘ no more.” * I am exalted to pardon you. ‘ I offer to you forgiveness “ without money ‘ and without price.” Receive the gift. ‘ “ Be not faithless, but believing.” Go in ‘ peace.’

What is your answer? ‘ I am not fit for ‘ so great a mercy. They are the *Penitent*, ‘ to whom these promises are made. I am ‘ not penitent. My heart is hard, and I ‘ cannot soften it. I cannot feel my iniqui- ‘ ties, I cannot weep for them; I cannot ‘ hate them, as I ought to do. What in- ‘ terest can I have in the promises of par- ‘ don? How can I hope that my sins will ‘ be forgiven?’

Attend once more to the words of the text, Jesus is exalted to *give* repentance. Repentance is his gift, no less than pardon. That same Jesus, who bestows forgiveness,

* Matt. ii. 28.—Isaiah, xliv. 2.—Heb. viii. 12.

bestows repentance also. What you are not able to do for yourselves, he can do for you. He can soften the hard heart. He can smite the rock, and make the waters of contrition flow. He can "bless you, by turning you from your iniquities." Give up the idea then of softening your own heart. Lay aside the vain hope of making yourself penitent. Seek repentance as a gift. Pray to Jesus to bestow it on you; "to grant to you repentance unto life." Beseech him, in the words of our church, to "give you repentance and his Holy Spirit;" to "create and make in you new and contrite hearts;" to "take away from you all hardness of heart." He will hear your prayers. As a prince and a Saviour, he will bring deliverance. "A new heart will he give you; and a new spirit will he put within you; and he will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and he will give you a heart of flesh; and he will put his spirit within you, and cause you to walk in his statutes; and you shall keep his judgements and do them." *

* Ezek. xxxiv. 26, 27.

SERMON XII.

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL IN CHANGING THE HEARTS AND LIVES OF MEN.

1 Cor. vi. 11.

And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

The gospel of Christ is the instrument which God has appointed for the conversion of sinners: and its wonderful efficacy, in turning men "from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God," proves its divine appointment. What a striking instance of this kind is that mentioned by St. Paul in the text! He had been speaking of the certain destruction which awaited the ungodly. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covet-

ous nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. Such, however," adds the Apostle, speaking to the members of the Corinthian church, "Such were some of you."—Some of them had formerly been persons of this character. They had lived in the practice of the most abominable sins, and had been subject to all the guilt, and shame, and punishment, which their sins bring with them. Was *such*, however, *still* their condition? Were they *still* persons of this character? No. They had undergone a most great, and a most glorious change. They were now "washed; they were sanctified; they were justified."—They were become new creatures; in character, in conduct, the very reverse of what they had formerly been. Their guilt and pollution were taken away; "they were *washed*."—They were no longer under condemnation, no longer at enmity with God, and children of wrath. A blessed reconciliation had taken place. They were justified, pardoned, received into favour, and become heirs of eternal life.—They were no longer living in the practice of wickedness. They had renounced the hidden things of darkness. They now hated those sins in which they had once delighted. They were *sanctified*. They were made partakers of a

new and holy natnre. They loved GOD and holiness; and already possessed in their souls .a foretaste of heavenly happiness. By what means, by what instrument, had this wonderful change been brought about? By the gospel of Christ. The blood of the Lord Jesus was the fountain in which they had been washed. "*In his name,*" by faith in his name they were justified: "*by his Spirit* they were sanctified." From first to last, He was the sole, the blessed author of the glorious change, which had taken place in their state. Consider well what they *had been;* idolaters, adulterers, thieves, drunkards, revilers: walking in the lusts of the flesh and of the mind: sunk in the most abominable wickedness; following all uncleanness with greediness; then consider what they now were, delivered from this lost, this miserable, this degraded state, *washed, justified, sanctified.* Behold this astonishing change! behold what Jesus by his name, by his Spirit, had done; and acknowledge the *power* of the Gospel. Where shall we find any other instrument, which could have done such a work as this? — What reason then have we earnestly to pray, that the Lord, as in former times, would make known his power among us; and cause this his appointed

instrument to be mighty in operation, washing the unclean, justifying the ungodly, and sanctifying the unholy.

In farther discoursing on the words of the text, I purpose to draw from them two important Truths, which I shall separately explain and apply.

I. That the Gospel of Christ is abundantly sufficient for saving the greatest sinners.

II. That a man's religion is to be tried, not by his *past*, but by his *present* character, not by what he *was*, but by what he *is*.

I. I am to show that the Gospel of Christ is abundantly sufficient for saving the greatest sinners.

The salvation of a sinner contains two things, his deliverance from the guilt and punishment of sin; and his recovery to the divine image and likeness; in other words, his justification and his sanctification. Let either of these blessings be wanting, and his salvation would be unfinished. Though his sins should be pardoned, yet so long as his heart remained filthy and corrupt, he could never see GOD. Let his soul be renewed in righteousness and true holiness; yet without forgiveness of sins, such a renewal would profit him nothing. In the or case he would still need a title for enter-

ing into heavenly glory; in the other he would still want a fitness for enjoying heavenly happiness. But in both these respects the salvation of the Gospel is complete. It is abundantly sufficient for saving sinners both from the punishment and from the power of sin. It undertakes to procure for them the forgiveness of their sins; and the renewal of their hearts; and it undertakes to do this for *all* sinners who wish to have it done for them; for the *greatest* sinners, for those whose guilt is most highly aggravated, for those whose evil habits are most deeply rooted. Nor does it undertake to do more than it is able to perform. The instance of the Corinthians in the text, fully explains and confirms this truth. Surely, if there could have been any sinners, whose case the remedy provided in the Gospel would not reach, these Corinthians would have been the persons. If any sins could utterly shut out a man from the divine mercy, *their* sins would have shut *them* out. For what sins can be greater? Idolatry, adultery, uncleanness, theft, covetousness, drunkenness, reviling, and extortion; these were the horrid, the abominable practices, in which they had lived. But had even these sins shut them out from mercy? Had the Gospel been found insufficient for recovering

them out of this their lost and guilty state? No. We have seen that they were washed, that they were sanctified, that they were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. They stand forth as decisive proofs of the power and sufficiency of the Gospel for saving the greatest sinners. Indeed, the whole Bible proclaims the same truth. The blessed Jesus, the eternal Son of the Most High, came into the world on purpose that he might save sinners; sinners of every rank and description, without any exception or reserve. He commanded that "remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations *;" and to show in the clearest manner, how free and full his salvation was, he especially directed that the first offers of it should be made to the Jews, to those very persons, who with wicked hands had crucified and slain him. We are expressly told that the "blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin;" that "he is able to save them to *the uttermost*, that come unto God by Him;" that he "will *in no wise* cast out any that come to him;" that "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." † His invita-

* Luke, xxv. 47. † John, i. 7. — Heb. vii. 25. — John, vi. 37. — Rom. x. 13.

tions are addressed to all, without any restrictions: "Ho, *every one* that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "If *any man* thirst, let him come unto me and drink." *Whosoever will*, let him take of the water of life freely." *

In short, so rich, so full, so vast, is his mercy, that none are shut out from a share in it, but those, who, by their obstinacy and impenitence, shut out themselves. Do you require any farther witnesses to this truth? Look at many of the persons celebrated in the Scripture for their piety and holiness, and see what their former characters had been. What had the Ephesian converts been before they received the Gospel? They had "been dead in trespasses and sins," "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind," "without GOD in the world." † What had Matthew and Zaccheus been before their conversion? Publicans, persons usually distinguished for their covetousness, their rapacity, and their extortion. What had Onesimus been? A run-away, dishonest servant. What had St. Paul himself been? "A blasphemer, a persecutor," nay, as he declared, "the chief

* Isaiah, lv. 1. — John, vii. 37. — Rev. xxii. 17.
† Ephes. ii. 1. 3. 12.

of sinners." * But for all these the Gospel proved sufficient. For the thief upon the cross, — for the jailer at Philippi, — for thousands among the wicked Jews, — for tens of thousands among the idolatrous Gentiles, it proved sufficient. "In the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our GOD, they were washed, they were justified, they were sanctified." They were saved from condemnation, and created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works.

Let us then apply the truth thus firmly established, for correcting an error into which men are apt to fall, respecting the condition of others. When we see a person notoriously evil and profligate, how apt are we to speak of him, as being in a state which is past recovery. 'Nothing (we cry) 'can reclaim such an abandoned sinner. 'His condition is hopeless and desperate: 'and every attempt to reform him will be 'useless.' Such language most frequently springs from pride and self-sufficiency; but it is always joined with great ignorance of a man's own heart, and of the rich provision made in the Gospel for perishing sinners. Let none of us then, my brethren, make use of such language: for the opinion con-

* 1 Tim. i. 13. 15.

tained in it is most unfounded. We can have no reason to pronounce the state of any man to be desperate, for there is no sinner whom Jesus Christ cannot convert and save. Had we seen these Corinthian converts in the days of their ignorance and sin, we might perhaps have deemed their condition to be hopeless, and might have blamed every endeavour to make them better, as misplaced and utterly useless. But in so doing we should clearly have done wrong. Despair not then of any persons, however lost they may appear to be. But pray for them, "if peradventure GOD will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth." Remember that the same grace, which was sufficient for the Corinthians, will be sufficient for them. They who are farthest off may yet be brought nigh. Those who are last may be first.

Let this subject be applied also for consolation and encouragement to convinced and humbled sinners. Such often stand greatly in need of consolation. They are filled with anxious fears for their safety. The recollection of their sins weighs down their spirits; and makes them ready to conclude that their state is hopeless. 'Were 'our offences fewer in number, were they 'less in degree, we might hope for pardon.

'Had we not lived so long in sin, had we 'not run such lengths in wickedness, we 'might lay aside our fears. But guilty as 'we are, what hope can we have of mercy? 'Can GOD forgive such great offenders? 'Can he cleanse and soften a heart so 'foul and hard as ours?' Yes, my brethren, He can cleanse and soften the foulest, the hardest heart. Suppose that your former state has been as bad as that of the Corinthians. Suppose that, like them, you have followed "all uncleanness with greediness;" yet He who saved them can save you. He who washed, who justified, who sanctified them, can wash, can justify, can sanctify you. Distrust not then his power. There is mercy with him for every penitent offender. Believe in the name of the Lord Jesus, and your sins, though many, though great, shall be blotted out. Pray for the Spirit of our GOD; and your soul, though "all as an unclean thing," shall be purified. Listen to this gracious and encouraging promise: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, I will cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of

flesh: and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgements and do them." *

But while the truth before us speaks comfort to the penitent sinner, it leaves the impenitent without excuse. Is the gospel of Christ abundantly sufficient for saving the greatest sinners? May all, even the chief of sinners, be pardoned and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God? Then why do any of you continue in the practice of sin? Why, when you may be freed from its guilt and power, do you continue in a state of wrath and wretched slavery? Is it not plain that you "love darkness rather than light;" that you prefer slavery to freedom; that you "*will not* come to Christ, that you may have life?" The grace and mercy of God set forth in the Gospel, and the plentiful and wonderful salvation there provided, strikingly expose, and greatly increase, the wickedness of those, who still continue the slaves of lust, of pride, of anger, of sensual appetite, of violent and uncharitable tempers. Had these Corinthians persisted in giving way to their evil and depraved inclinations, *after* the grace of God had come

* Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26, 27.

among them, they would have been far more guilty and inexcusable, than even they had formerly been. Tremble then for yourselves, my brethren; if not made better by the mercy of the Gospel, you still cleave to your iniquities; and thus too plainly show, that you receive the grace of God in vain.

II. I go on to explain and apply the other truth to be drawn from the text; namely, that a man's religion is to be tried not by his *past*, but by his *present* character, not by what he *was*, but what he *is*.

This truth may be easily explained, and stands in need of little proof. — True religion makes a real change in a man. It "transforms him by the renewing of his mind." It makes all things new within him; puts into the heart new desires, new hopes, new motives, and leads him to walk in newness of life. Would we then know, whether a man be truly religious or not, we must enquire into the proofs of his conversion: we must see, whether he have undergone this change or not. — Is he a new creature? Are old things passed away? Are all things become new? What is his *present* conduct? Does it agree with his profession of religion? To judge of his religion by what his character was before he became religious,

would be foolish and unjust. Would it not be trifling to say that these Corinthians were not true converts to Christianity, because *formerly*, before their conversion, they had been idolaters, adulterers, or drunkards? Whatever they *were*, their character as sound Christians is built on solid grounds. The point is this. Have they, or have they not, forsaken their former evil practices? If they have renounced the hidden things of darkness: if they be now "walking as children of light:" if their lives and tempers, and conversation, now show that they are sanctified by the Spirit of our GOD: if they have these marks of true Christianity; you surely would not attempt to prove that they are not Christians, even if in the days of their ignorance, they had been more abandoned than they actually were.

Let this truth then correct a practice, which is too general in the world. When a man begins to take up a serious profession of religion, nothing is more common than to hear all the irregularities and sins of his former life charged against him as clear proofs of his present hypocrisy. 'What 'pretensions can this man make to be religious? Have we not known him from 'his youth? Do we not remember such 'and such parts of his conduct? Are we

'not well acquainted with what his manner 'of life has been?' — But, my brethren, what are all these charges to the purpose? What do they prove, except the ignorance of those who bring them, and the secret enmity which they indulge against religion? Allow that the man *has been* as bad as you describe him to have been, (probably if asked, he will acknowledge himself to have been far worse,) yet the question is, not what he was, but what he is: not what you *remember* him *to have been*, but what you now see him to be. Do you not now see him leading a new life? Do you not now see him leaving off those practices, which he once followed; forsaking those companions, which he once loved? denying and subduing those tempers, which he once indulged? While you have these proofs of the sincerity of his religious profession, cease to expose your own folly and wickedness, by reproaching him with sins, which he committed before he had taken up that profession. — True Christian charity would lead you to hope, to believe the best of every one: would lead you even to make *great* allowances, wherever circumstances will admit; and to adopt, on every occasion, the most favourable opinion.

But while we apply this truth for cor-

recting our wrong judgement of others, let us also use it for forming a right judgement of ourselves. What we were by nature, the Scriptures plainly tell us, and experience as plainly proves. We were born in sin, and were children of wrath. If by the Grace of God we have been kept from running into many of those excesses, of which the Corinthians were guilty, yet still in some shape or other we have served sin, and have obeyed it in some of the lusts thereof. By nature we were far off from God: we followed the devices and desires of our own evil heart; and had pleasure in unrighteousness. This was our state: for it is naturally the state of all. But the question, which we are concerned to answer is this, *Is it still our state?* Are we still children of wrath? Are we still "foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures?" Are we still the servants of sin? Or have we been made free from sin? Have we experienced that real inward change, which true religion will certainly produce? Let us remember, that there may be much seeming outward alteration where there is no real inward change. There may be a seeming forsaking of sin, when, in fact, there is only a turning from one sin to another. There may be a much

more diligent attendance on religious duties, especially public ones, than formerly, while the heart remains unmoved. — Let us beware then of concluding, on slight grounds, that we are washed, that we are justified; that we are sanctified. Is there such a clear, an abiding, an entire change wrought in our hearts, and influencing our lives, that the Apostle could say of us, as he said of the Romans, "GOD be thanked, that ye *were* the servants of sin*," that is, "God be thanked, that though ye *were* such, ye are such no longer;" "but," as he adds, "ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you?" My brethren, never think yourselves safe till it be thus with you. Never conclude that you are "justified in the name of the Lord Jesus," till you have good reason to hope from the increasing experience of your own hearts, that you are "sanctified also by the spirit of our God."

Are you arrived at this hope? Let it be your great concern to show forth in your lives the reality and greatness of the change which you have undergone. Recollect the Apostle's admonition to the Ephesians; "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; *walk as children*

* Rom. vi. 17.

of light."* "Let your profiting appear unto all men." Whatever may have been the irregularities and sins of your former life, in the days of your ignorance, so labour *now* to adorn your Christian profession, "that they may be ashamed who falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ: and having no evil thing to say of you†," may be forced to own that you are indeed "washed, justified, sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

* Ephes. v. 8. † 1 Peter, iii. 16.

SERMON XIII.

SANCTIFICATION THROUGH THE WORD.

JOHN, xvii. 17.

Sanctify them through thy Truth: Thy Word is Truth.

SANCTIFICATION, in its first and plain meaning, signifies a *separation* from common and ordinary uses to higher and sacred purposes. Thus, under the law of Moses, the Sabbath, the temple, the vessels employed in the sacrifices, were said to be *sanctified*, that is, they were set apart for holy purposes. Thus the priests under the old dispensation, and the ministers of the Gospel under the new, are by their office *sanctified*, or peculiarly appointed and separated to the worship of GOD. And thus Christians also, being by baptism dedicated to the service of God, and by profession his people, are *sanctified*. But this sanctification is, after all, only outward. There is another sanctification which is inward, the sanctification of the heart, which consists in a separation

from sin; in a renewal of the soul to holiness; in a recovery of our nature from the depravity brought on us by the fall of our first parents; and in a restoration to the divine image and likeness.

It is in *this* sanctification, in this separation from sin, that our fitness lies, for entering into heavenly glory; "for without holiness no man shall see the Lord*:" and doubtless it is this sanctification of which our Lord speaks in the text. He prays that all who believe in him may be *sanctified;* may be delivered from the love, the power, the pollution of sin; may be renewed in the spirit of their minds: and so may be made meet for partaking the inheritance of the saints in light. "Sanctify them through thy Truth: Thy word is Truth."

In discoursing on these words, I propose,

I. To state some particulars respecting the work of Sanctification.

II. To consider the great instrument, or outward Mean here mentioned, by which this work is carried on.

I. We may observe of Sanctification,

1. That it is a *divine* work.

It is not in man to renew and sanctify his own soul. He might as well attempt to create a world, as to create his own heart anew.

* Hebrews, xii. 14.

"The preparations of the heart are from the Lord."* Our Saviour plainly intimates this truth in the text: for he does not tell his disciples to sanctify themselves, but he prays to his Father to sanctify them. This work of sanctification indeed, in the scheme of our redemption, is peculiarly undertaken by the Holy Ghost. That divine person is the agent who begins and finishes this glorious work. He is the author of our Sanctification. He first puts holy desires and resolutions into our hearts. "He quickens us when dead," and implants into us a new principle of spiritual life. Hence we are said "to be born again of the Spirit." By fresh and continual supplies of his grace, he preserves the divine life which he at first gave. Having sown the seed of holiness in the soul, he waters and nourishes it, causes it to shoot and grow, and enables it in due time to bring forth its proper fruits. Of ourselves we are as utterly unable to go forward in the divine life, as we were at first to set out in it. It is "the Spirit who helpeth our infirmities."† Of ourselves we are unable to oppose sin with success. It is "through the Spirit that we mortify the deeds of the body."‡ When "the enemy

* Prov. xvi. 1.
† Rom. viii. 26.
‡ Rom. viii. 13.

comes in like a flood" upon the soul, it is "the Spirit of the Lord that lifts up a standard against him."* Let us make a proper use of this great truth. Let us not suppose that we can make our own hearts holy. Let us not attempt this work in our own strength. Let us remember that it is a *divine* work. Let us attempt it in reliance on the Spirit, in dependence on his promised help. Let us pray to him to sanctify us. Let us fear to grieve, to offend, to provoke him to leave us, without whose presence and aid we never can be made fit for seeing God, and for living in glory.

2. We may observe that Sanctification is a *gradual* work. Many are the steps, and oftentimes slow is the course by which it goes on. The different figures or ways of speaking used in Scripture to describe the work, show this to be the case. Thus the new-born child must pass through many stages ere it come to maturity, unto "the measure of the stature" of the perfect man. The seed sown in the ground bringeth forth "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."† And thus it is with the soul in Sanctification. Its perfect renewal to the divine image, its entire vic-

* Isaiah, lix. 19. † Mark, iv. 28.

tory over sin, is not completed at once.— Long and tedious is the combat between nature and grace. In fact, so long as we are in the body, we are engaged in an unceasing conflict with the power of corruption. Sin slowly retires, nor quits the field till after many and repeated defeats. Nay, oftentimes when seemingly overcome, it will suddenly revive, and struggle again for victory. — This view of the subject is calculated to give hope and comfort to those who are labouring under a sense of depravity, and feel sin to be strong within them. Such persons are apt to be gradually distressed at the power of remaining corruption. They feel that they cannot love God as they ought; that they cannot serve him and pray to him as they should do, and wish to do. They still find themselves subject to unholy affections, to evil thoughts, and to impure imaginations. Neither may they as yet be altogether free from occasionally yielding to their besetting sin. Hence they are filled with unfavourable opinions of themselves; and have gloomy and alarming fears respecting their spiritual state. They perhaps suppose that if they had true faith in Christ, they should already be sanctified, "*wholly* in body, in soul, and spirit;" and not finding this to be the case, they are ready to conclude, that they

are not really Christians. My brethren, let me remind such of you as answer this description, that sanctification is a *gradual* work. Though at present you may be far from perfection, yet it does not follow, that the work of grace is not begun in your soul. Though at present the signs of life may be few and weak, yet it does not follow that you are altogether dead in trespasses and sins. The very concern and grief which you feel on account of your remaining depravity, afford ground for believing that you are spiritually alive: for the dead feel not. "Despise not then the day of small things." Be thankful for even the little grace which you have, and labour to increase it. Pray for larger supplies of the Spirit. Be watchful. Be diligent. Redouble your exertions. Thus shall your progress in holiness be greater, and your evidences of it become more clear and certain. Thus shall the leaven gradually spread through the meal, until the whole be leavened.

3. Sanctification is a *progressive* or *increasing* work. It cannot in the nature of it be standing still. It must in some degree be going on. If a man be not gaining ground against his corruptions, he is, in fact, losing it; and thus gives too plain a proof, that he is really without true sanctifying grace.

For this seed of holiness when sown in the heart, like grain sown in the ground, proves itself to be alive by its *growth*. The real Christian, who is born again of the Spirit, can never arrive at such a state, as to be satisfied with his present attainments. The better he becomes acquainted with his own heart, and with the holy law of God, which is the rule and standard of his duty, the more he discovers of his own unworthiness and defects; the more he is dissatisfied with himself and his present attainments; and the more he is stirred up to fresh endeavours after an increase of holiness. How strikingly was this the case with St. Paul! He tells us that he "counted not himself to have apprehended," that is, to have gained a sufficient degree of holiness: on the contrary, "forgetting those things which were behind" — looking on his past attainments as nothing, and wholly undeserving his notice — he "reached forth unto those things which were before;" he earnestly desired and laboured after greater measures of holiness; and thus "pressed towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* So powerfully did the principle of sanctifying grace work in this great Apostle. Let

* Philip. iii. 13, 14.

this view of the subject correct the false notions of those, who imagine that they have already advanced in the divine life as far as they need to advance; that they are as good, as pure, and as holy, as they have any occasion to be: that they may safely lessen their endeavours, and not be troubling themselves about growing in grace. Let such as think thus, be assured, that at present they have no grace at all; that they know nothing of what they themselves really are; nothing of what they ought really to be: Let them learn, that they are as yet strangers to the work of Sanctification; and have hitherto "no part nor lot in the matter."

Having thus stated some particulars concerning the work of Sanctification, I proceed,

II. To consider the great instrument or outward Mean, mentioned in the text, by which this work is carried on.

The instrument or Mean here mentioned is the *word of God.* Our Lord prays, "Sanctify them *through thy truth;* thy word is truth." GOD works by means. He is not indeed confined to the use, or in the choice of them; but he generally employs them in accomplishing his purposes. The Holy Spirit, we have already seen, is the blessed Agent, the Divine Person, who

sanctifies the sinner; but, as we are taught in the text, it is *through the Word*, that he usually vouchsafes his influence. This is the *Instrument*, which, according to the divine plan, he most frequently employs for beginning and carrying on this good work in our hearts. Thus Christians are said by St. Peter to be "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God;" while they are afterwards exhorted by the same Apostle, "as new-born babes to desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby." *

In considering this instrument, let us first attend to the *character* here given of it, which strongly points out its importance and excellence. "Thy word is *Truth*." GOD himself is truth. What wonder, then, if his word be truth? How can it be otherwise? The word of GOD, coming from him, must be like him a copy and image of himself. The Bible, being given by inspiration from GOD," "written by holy men of old, who spake" and wrote "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost†," is perfectly true. All the events related in it, undoubtedly took place at the time, and in the manner described. All the information

* 1 Peter, i. 23.; ii. 2.
† 2 Tim. iii. 10.—1 Peter, i. 21.

contained in it respecting the Creation of the World, the Fall of Man, and the Redemption by Christ, may be depended on with the most undoubted certainty. All the precious promises of Scripture will surely be fulfilled. All the dreadful threatenings denounced in it will assuredly be executed. All its prophecies will in due time be exactly accomplished. "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." * What a blessing should we esteem it, in our present state of ignorance and doubt, to possess this source of unerring truth, to have this clear light shining in a dark place; this sure guide to our feet through the windings and mazes of the wilderness in which we are wandering! What a treasure should the Bible be to us, when we consider it in the character here given of it by our blessed Lord, as truth; as affording to us on those points, on which it most concerns us to be rightly informed, the clearest and most certain information; information on which we may depend with full assurance, with unshaken confidence! My brethren, it is in this character that I wish you particularly to consider the Word of God. It is *Truth.* It is the only source

* Matt. v. 18.

and standard of religious truth. All other books which profess to teach you any thing on religion, are to be believed and depended on only so far as they agree with the Bible. All the sermons which you hear, are to be brought to the same proof. They must be tried by this standard. If the doctrines set forth in them be not agreeable to Scripture, you are not bound to regard them; nay, you are bound not to regard them. But on the other hand, remember that if they *do* agree with the written Word, they are undoubtedly true, and you cannot disregard them without the most fearful danger.

In the next place, let us consider the *Fitness* of this instrument for the work in which it is used.

While God works by means, He appoints or chooses such means as are most fitted to attain the end. Thus it is with his Word, considered as the instrument of Sanctification. All its power and virtue are drawn from the accompanying influence of the Spirit; but still, in itself, it appears to be exactly fitted for accomplishing the end proposed. — In the first place, the Word of God furnishes the strongest *motives* for the attainment of holiness. It sets before us, in every possible way, the misery and

danger of an unsanctified state. It assures us, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." It describes in the most lively and affecting language the dreadful consequences of dying with a heart unfit for heaven, and heavenly joys. It teaches us, however, that such by nature *is* our heart: and that it is unholy, unclean, even dead in sins; while in the most earnest manner, with the most persuasive arguments, it exhorts us to wake from our sleep, to put off the old man, and to put on the new man. On the other hand, while the Word of God thus powerfully awakens our fears, it is calculated with equal force to engage our desires on the side of holiness. It describes, "as with the tongue of angels," the blessedness of being like unto God; makes known to us the glory and riches of the inheritance which is prepared for them that are sanctified; opens to our view the heavenly Jerusalem "into which nothing unclean shall enter;" and thus, by these representations, excites in us a longing after that holiness, which alone can fit us for the enjoyment of this happiness.

Again, the Word of God furnishes the strongest *encouragements* to the attainment of holiness. Necessary as the work of Sanctification must appear, we might yet

despair of its ever being accomplished. The difficulty might appear so great as to discourage our hopes, and dispirit our exertions. But the Scriptures tend much to quiet our apprehensions, to awaken our hopes, and to animate our endeavours. They set before us the most promising prospect of success. They assure us that the recovery of our soul from sin to holiness may surely be attained, if we have recourse to the proper means. They inform us that it is a work which GOD delights should be done; for "this is the will of GOD, even our sanctification." * They teach us that this was the great object which Christ came from Heaven to accomplish; that for the attainment of it he suffered, and died, and now intercedes at the right hand of GOD. They set before us many signal instances of men, who, naturally of like passions with ourselves, born in sin, and the slaves of iniquity, yet by the power of the Gospel were enabled to overcome their corruptions, and to walk in newness of life. Thus does the Word of GOD *encourage* us to seek this blessing for ourselves.

Further, it furnishes the plainest *directions* for the attainment of holiness. While the

* 1 Thess. iv. 3.

Scriptures excite in us a desire after holiness; while they encourage us to the pursuit of it, they also show us how it may be attained: they direct us to the use of proper means for the sanctifying of our hearts. They bid us undertake this great work, not in our own strength, but in the promised strength of the Holy Ghost. They teach us how to pray for the Spirit. They direct us to add to our prayers, watchfulness, diligence, and perseverance. They warn us of the dangers to which we are chiefly liable, and of the evils against which we should especially guard; while by the most edifying examples, as well as the most instructive precepts, they point out to us the steps which we should either take or avoid, in advancing from a state of sin to a state of holiness.

Upon the whole, then, how *fitted* is this instrument to the work in which it is used! By what more suitable means could the Spirit begin and carry on the work of Sanctification in our hearts, than by the *motives*, the *encouragements*, and the *directions* set forth in the Word of God: means, directly calculated to promote the end proposed, and to become, in the hand of the Spirit, effectual for accomplishing this gracious purpose!

But while we especially admire the wisdom of God in this part of his dispensation of the covenant of grace, let us derive from the subject a lesson of practical utility.—If it be through the Word that we are sanctified; if the Bible be the great instrument which the Spirit employs for renewing our hearts; then, my brethren, let us make the Bible our study. Let us read the Word with reverence and attention. Let us endeavour to become more and more acquainted with it. Let us treasure it up in our minds, and store it in our memories, that so it may "dwell in us richly in all wisdom."* Especially let us pray, that it, "may be mixed with faith in our hearts," and become in us the seed of eternal life. Without earnest prayer to God to bless his Word to our souls, we shall hear or read it with no profit. Pray then that it may be blessed to your soul. Pray that through it you may be sanctified. Pray that the motives, the encouragements, the directions, which it sets forth for the attainment of holiness, may be made effectual for quickening, for animating, for guiding you in the great and difficult work of Sanctification. Nor let the greatness and difficulty of the work, if you truly desire its accomplishment, discourage

* 1 Col. iii. 16.

and alarm you. The Spirit, who has undertaken it, is able to perform it. Christ has prayed for the sanctification of all his people. If by faith you are one of his, you shall at length be made perfect in holiness. Go on in the appointed way. Use the means prescribed. "Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." And "may the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

SERMON XIV..

FALSE AND TRUE MARKS OF GROWTH IN GRACE.

2 PETER, iii. 18.

Grow in Grace.

CHRISTIANITY is intended to bring us to holiness: to make us holy like GOD, that we may be happy with him. If religion does not do this for us, it does nothing. Let us not, however, suppose, that it does this for us at once. No: holiness is a gradual work. It is a work, indeed, which will never be perfected in this world; for we shall never become perfectly like GOD, till we shall "see him as he is." But it is a work, which must be begun, and carried on, and to a considerable degree advanced, in this life. It is a work which cannot, with any safety, be left to stand still: for, in fact, if it be not going forward, it is going backward. Hence St. Peter gives to his readers the admonition in the text: "Grow in Grace." He urges them to make progress

in the divine Life: not only to add one Christian virtue to another (as he had exhorted them to do in the beginning of his Epistle), but to labour that every Christian Grace be increased and strengthened in the soul.

What then is it to grow in Grace? When may the Christian be said to be thus going forward in the divine life?

This is a question of the utmost moment; a question to which I shall endeavour, on the present occasion, to reply.

The subject, indeed, is one on which there are many mistakes. False notions are frequently held concerning it; and false marks, by which growth in Grace may be judged of, are frequently laid down. And from these errors a double evil arises. Persons, who have not any, or at least very doubtful, signs of grace, boast with confidence and presumption of their interest in Christ: while those who are really growing in grace, are greatly discouraged, and thus lose the peace and comfort which they ought to have. In prosecuting, then, this subject, I shall,

I. Mention and expose some False Marks of Growth in Grace.

II. State some true ones.

I. One False Mark of Growth in Grace, is *an increase of religious knowledge:* Persons think, that because they *know* more than they did on religious matters, they are certainly becoming better Christians. But in this opinion they may be greatly mistaken. Grace and knowledge are things very distinct. Knowledge *may* be placed only in the head or understanding: while Grace *must be* seated in the heart or affections. True it is, that when a man is growing in Grace, he will at the same time be growing in knowledge; and hence St. Paul prays for the Philippians, that their "love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgement."* But it is not true, on the other side, that when a man is growing in knowledge, he is *therefore* growing in Grace. We are told that "knowledge puffeth up."† This is what it naturally does. And when men grow more knowing, they oftentimes grow more proud. They become vain and conceited in proportion to their increase of knowledge; are lifted up with a sense of their supposed superiority; and look down upon others with disdain and contempt. Does not St. Paul say in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, "that though he had the gift of prophecy,

* Philip. i. 2. † 1 Cor. viii. 1.

and understood all mysteries and all knowledge, yet he might be nothing?"* And what a striking proof of the truth of this saying is the example of the prophet Balaam! He describes himself as the man "whose eyes were opened," "which heard the word of God, and knew the knowledge of the Most High."† And yet where shall we meet with a man more wicked, more destitute of holiness, than Balaam was? So little is knowledge in divine things a certain mark of grace: and so little reason have those, who possess no better mark than this, to presume on their interest in Christ.

Equally vain is the presumption of those persons, who imagine that they are growing in grace, merely because they find *an increasing pleasure in talking about religion, or in hearing others talk about it.* Doubtless this would be a very satisfactory mark, if religion consisted only in *talking* and *hearing*. But this is not the case. When a man indeed becomes truly religious, his conversation will be seasoned with grace. "Out of the good treasure of his heart, he will bring forth good things." — He will find pleasure in discoursing on religious subjects and with religious people. But this

* 1 Cor. xiii. 2. † Numb. xxiv. 15, 16.

part of the Christian's character, like most others, has its counterfeit; and may be in a degree imitated by those who are not really Christians. Men may talk, and talk well about religion, and find pleasure in talking about it, when they have no religion themselves. The Apostle tells us of some who were "unruly and vain talkers," and of others who "had turned aside unto vain jangling;" even "desiring to be teachers of the law," yet "understanding neither what they said, nor whereof they affirmed." * Men may find pleasure in talking about religion, because they may love to hear themselves talk; or because it gratifies their vanity, by drawing the notice and admiration of others; and there is no difficulty in supposing that a man, who can talk easily on other subjects, may talk in the same manner on religion. — To account, then, our being able to talk readily about spiritual things, a proof of our spiritual progress, and to conclude that because we are swift to speak, we are therefore growing in grace, would be sad self-deception. Before we can thus deceive ourselves, we must have quite forgotten what St. Paul says, that "though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels," we *may* yet

* Titus, i. 10.— 1 Tim. i. 6, 7.

only be "as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."*

The same thing holds good with respect to *hearing* about religion. There are some people who think that they can never *hear* enough about it; who are running to every place where they may hear something new; and who seem to measure their Growth in Grace by the length of time which they spend, or the inconveniences which they endure, in hearing the word of God. They imagine that religion is rapidly increasing in their soul, because they bestow so much pains in seeking after the truth, and listen to it with so much eagerness and delight. But may they not be greatly deceived in this opinion? May not these pains which they take, and this delight which they feel, arise from other causes than those which are good; and, consequently, may they not give room for suspecting that religion is losing ground in their heart instead of gaining it? May not this love of hearing arise from their having "itching ears," which lead them to "heap to themselves teachers?" Such a case is possible. It must surely then be very unwise, as well as unsafe, to try our spiritual state by a mark

* 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

which, though we possess it, yet after all proves nothing.

I will notice one other False Mark of Growth in Grace, namely, a fancied *zeal for God in Religion.* Doubtless, "it is good to be zealously affected in a good thing." And religion, of all other things, most deserves our zeal, and indeed claims it from us. But then we know from the case of the Jews, that there may be a "zeal of GOD, but not according to knowledge."* A man, whose disposition is naturally warm on other matters, may be equally warm on spiritual subjects, without his warmth about religion being any proof that he is "growing in Grace." His zeal may, in fact, be the zeal of maintaining his own opinion from a principle of pride and obstinacy; or the zeal of promoting a party or sect in the church. The Pharisees had great zeal of this kind, for they "compassed heaven and earth to make one proselyte," or convert, to their opinions; yet no one will suppose, that by so doing they gave any proof of their Growth in Grace. Jehu, the king of Israel, showed great earnestness in the cause of GOD; and yet if he should hence have concluded that religion

* Rom. x. 2.

was gaining ground in his heart, we know that he would have miserably deceived himself. "Come," says he to Jehonadab, "come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord." His zeal showed itself in destroying the prophets of Baal, and in cutting off the enemies of God: but we are also told that, "he took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart."*

The apostles of our Lord might also think that they were growing in grace, when, out of zeal for their Master's honour, they proposed to call down fire on his adversaries. Did Jesus, however, give them any encouragement to think that their zeal was of a heavenly character? No. He strongly reproved them, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."† — From these statements we may plainly see how insufficient, and therefore how deceitful an evidence of our progress in holiness is that, which often takes the appearance and name of religious zeal.

Having thus mentioned and exposed some of the False Marks of Growth in Grace, by which persons are occasionally led to form a mistaken opinion of their spiritual state, I proceed,

II. To state some True Marks. — God

* 2 Kings, x. 16. 31. † Luke, ix. 55.

grant; my brethren, that we may find ourselves, on examination, to possess these marks.

1. One real sign of our growing in grace is our growing in *humility*. Humility is the first of the Christian graces. It is a part of "that mind which was in Christ Jesus." It is that state and disposition of the heart which is entirely contrary to its natural state and disposition; for naturally, pride reigns in every heart. To grow then in humility, is, in fact, to be growing more like to Jesus Christ, and less like what we were in our natural state. Here is an undoubted evidence of Growth in Grace. But when may we be said to be growing in humility? We are growing in humility, when we are increasing in lowly thoughts of ourselves, of our pretensions and attainments: when we become more and more deeply abased under a sense of our unworthiness; when we are daily learning to distrust more and more our own understanding; and in lowliness of mind to esteem others better and wiser than ourselves. We are growing in humility, when we find in ourselves an increasing readiness to listen to advice; to receive reproof with meekness and thankfulness; to see others advanced or preferred before us, without envy or repining; to endure contradiction

without being stirred up to wrath or strife. These are genuine fruits of true humility; and wherever they are found, clearly prove a Growth in Grace.

2. Another clear proof to the same purpose is an increasing habit of *self-denial.* By nature we are all *self-willed.* Self is the great idol which we worship. Self-interest is the grand object which we pursue. We love to please ourselves, to advance ourselves. We think that our own concerns are of the first importance; and that those of all other persons are to give way to ours. But Grace teaches us a different lesson. It teaches us to deny ourselves; to resist and subdue this selfish principle in our hearts. Grace bids us "look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others *;" to care for others, for their concerns and interests equally with our own. It bids us even to deprive ourselves of seeming advantages, and to abstain from the use of our privileges, rather than run any risk of proving an hinderance, or doing an injury to others; and this not only in our worldly transactions, but also in our spiritual concerns. Of this self-denying forbearance for the sake and benefit of others, St. Paul sets a striking example;

* Philip. ii. 4.

when he declares, that "if meat make his brother to offend, he would eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest he make his brother to offend."* Do we find then that we are daily increasing in this habit of self-denial? Are we daily becoming less and less self-willed? Do we more frequently oppose and cross our own inclinations? If some supposed good be set before us, are we influenced in our choice or rejection of it by the consideration, not whether it will be pleasant or unpleasant to our feelings, but whether it will be profitable or hurtful to our spiritual interests; and do we extend the enquiry beyond ourselves to others also? Do we endeavour, even at the expense of not pleasing ourselves, "to please our neighbour for his good to edification?"† If we be acting thus, in this spirit, and with these views, we may conclude, on scriptural grounds, that we are growing in Grace: for this victory over *self*, this mortification of our perverse and selfish will, this disposition to give up our own pleasure or advantage for the comfort and good of others, is decidedly the work of that Holy Spirit, whose fruit is love, gentleness, and goodness.

3. Another true mark of Growth in Grace, is an increasing *simplicity and ingenu-*

* 1 Cor. viii. 3. † Rom. xv. 2.

ousness of mind. Men are naturally prone to falsehood and deception. Being of the seed of the Serpent, who is "a liar and the father of lies," what wonder that, in the language of the Psalmist, "they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies?"* The many artifices, impositions, and flatteries allowed, practised, and even defended by the generality of men, show how deeply this propensity is rooted in the natural heart. But Grace opposes itself to every thing of this kind. It condemns and abhors all falsehood, and duplicity, and insincerity of every kind. It admits no excuse, however plausible, for such practices. It requires and promotes "*truth* in the inward parts." The true people of God are expressly said to be "children that will not lie†;" such, in fact, as Christ describes Nathanael to have been, "an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile‡;" one in whom there was no deceit, nor cunning; no duplicity, nor falsehood; but a simple, an open, and an ingenuous mind. Do you find in yourselves this mark of Grace? If you *deliberately allow* yourselves to act a double part, you have no grace at all. You are clearly still of the seed of the Serpent. But if you are growing in Grace, you are growing in a

* Psalm lviii. 3. † Isaiah, lxiii. 8. ‡ John, i. 47.

hatred of all deceit and artifice. You reject with increasing abhorrence every plan, whether suggested by others, or by your own heart, or by the father of lies, which would lead you to dissemble or deceive. You strive not to be drawn into the practice of such sin by any crafty pretences, which may be made to hide its wickedness. You know that falsehood is falsehood, and sin is sin, however dressed out and recommended by gaudy colouring. You habitually search your heart, and watch, and pray, lest in this respect it should be imposed on by its own natural deceitfulness, or by the "cunning craftiness of men who lie in wait to deceive," or by the subtlety of the Serpent, who aims to beguile you of your Christian simplicity: that simplicity which is the surest evidence, and the brightest ornament, of the Christian character. GOD grant, my brethren, that we may have this mark of our Growth in Grace clear and decisive.

4. I shall briefly mention one other mark. A growing *tenderness of conscience.* Men, in their natural state, have little or no fear of sinning. They are seldom prevented from giving way to their inclinations by the dread of offending GOD. But it is not so with the renewed man. Grace teaches him to fear sin, and to dread offending GOD.

Hence the more he grows in Grace the more he grows in tenderness of conscience, the more anxious he becomes on every occasion to know what the will of GOD is; and the more careful in suiting his conduct to it. Is any scheme proposed to him? He does not listen to the crafty reasonings of men: but enquires, 'What says the 'Bible? What are the plain and positive 'directions of Scripture?' To these he instantly submits: nor thinks himself allowed on any pretence to dispute or disobey them. Though an object appear in itself to be good and desirable, yet he does not feel himself justified in following it by means which the word of GOD condemns. He dreads doing evil that good may come. Where his conscience, enlightened by Scripture, is not perfectly clear with respect to the lawfulness of any action, he takes the safe side, and prudently forbears from venturing upon it. Thus he proves the power of Grace upon his soul.

Such, my brethren, are some True Marks of Growth in Grace. Many others might be mentioned. I have chosen such as appeared to me most plain and useful. I am sure, that if properly applied to your hearts, they will prevent your being in any error on this important point. I shall now conclude

with giving you some advice for promoting your Growth in Grace. When the Apostle exhorts you to grow in Grace, he bids you to use those means, by which this end will be most certainly attained.

Those means are chiefly, *secret prayer*, *private study of the word of God*, and *serious self-examination*. The man who most frequently and most diligently uses these means, will grow the most rapidly in Grace. Of course, it is supposed that they are accompanied with a regular attendance on the public ordinances of religion, which no man, who would grow in Grace, can safely neglect. But they are the *private means* on which I now lay particular stress: because they are those, which, it is to be feared, are frequently altogether neglected, or carelessly followed, even by many who attend the public ordinances; and because the most constant use of public means will, comparatively, but little profit without them. Grace is best increased in the soul, not by using *one* of the means of Grace, to the neglect of the rest, but by the using them *all* in their proper season, order, and proportion. It is in the *closet*, that by prayer and meditation you must digest what you have heard in the *church*. Be earnest, then, be frequent, be regular in the use of these private means.

The knowledge which you will gain from them will be most useful knowledge; the knowledge of yourselves. Would to GOD that we had all more of this knowledge! There would then be no doubt but that we should grow in Grace. May the Lord increase it in us, for his mercy's sake in Christ Jesus.

SERMON XV.

THE DUTY OF LETTING OUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE MEN.

MATTHEW, v. 16.

Let your light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.

THE disciples of Christ are "a peculiar people." Though living *in* the world, they are yet not *of* the world. They possess pleasures and privileges peculiarly their own. They have also peculiar duties belonging to them; and are called to the discharge of them by peculiar motives. Our Saviour, a little before the text, had told his disciples that they were "the Light of the World." This title, indeed, more directly belonged to himself; for He is the *true Light:* the real source of all knowledge, happiness, holiness, and glory. But still in a lower sense the name may be given to all his people. Receiving light from

Him, they "shine as lights in the world." They are born again of his Spirit. Their eyes have been opened to know the Saviour; to understand the nature of his kingdom; to see their need of his salvation. They have been brought to renounce themselves, their own righteousness and strength; to believe on Christ for the saving of their souls; and in a dependence on his promised grace, to seek after holiness of heart and life. Thus having been once darkness, they are now "Light in the Lord." That change, which has taken place in their views, their hopes, and their pursuits; that spiritual knowledge which they have received; that principle of grace which has been implanted in them, may well be expressed by the idea of *light;* they have been "called out of darkness into marvellous light." In the text, our blessed Lord shows them *how* they should use the light granted to them, and *why* they should use it thus.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works." If Christ has put light into his people, he does not intend that they should hide it, but that they should let it shine in the sight of the world. "Men do not light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a can-

dlestick; and it giveth light to all that are in the house." Thus Christians are not to bury their talents in the earth; they are to bring them into exercise: they are to show forth in their lives the blessed effects of religion upon their hearts. They are, in fact, "a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid." Their conduct will be narrowly watched. The eyes of the world will be constantly fixed on them. Their profession of greater piety will draw the notice of mankind, who will not be disposed to judge them in the most favourable manner. Hence are they particularly exhorted to "let their light so shine before men, that they may see their good works." It must be their anxious desire and study to maintain *good* works; to show forth a bright pattern of every Christian grace: to let the fruits of righteousness be seen in their whole life and conversation; and, in short, so to "avoid even the appearance of evil," as not to give any just occasion of reproach, nor to let "their good be evil spoken of."

And *why* should they thus use the light vouchsafed to them? What end should they have in view in thus endeavouring, that their good works may be seen of men? Is it that they may obtain the praise of men?

that they may be extolled for their piety, and may advance their own honour and credit in the world? No. Such a motive might influence and satisfy the Pharisees, who "loved the praise of men," and sought the honour which cometh from man only. But it is not the motive of the Christian. He must act from a higher principle. His end must as far surpass the end of the Pharisees, as his righteousness must exceed their righteousness. It is not his own glory, but GOD's glory, which he is to have in view. He is to let men see his good works, that they "may glorify his Father which is in heaven." The holy and exemplary life of the true Christian brings the greatest honour to GOD: it sets forth, in the clearest light, the reality and the power of religion: and tends above all other means to win men to Christ. It softens prejudices, removes objections, and silences the voice of calumny. When men behold the professed servant of Christ, living in every respect agreeably to his holy profession, they are forced, secretly at least, to admit the excellence of the Gospel. They cannot but feel that a *tree*, which brings forth such good fruit, must in itself be good: and thus oftentimes are they gradually led to glorify GOD by embracing

that Gospel, which, except it had been thus recommended, they would perhaps have persisted in rejecting. This, then, must be the object of Christians, to let their "conversation be such as becometh the Gospel of Christ," that so they may "adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things," and "show forth the praises of Him, who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light."*

Having thus given a general view of the admonition in the text, I shall now go farther into particulars. I shall mention some leading branches of the duty, prescribed under the command of "letting our light shine before men." The general precept will contain many important particulars.

In the first place, the true Christian must show that he is *earnest* about religion. He must show, that *Heaven* is the object at which he aims: and that nothing less than heaven will satisfy his desires. He *professes* to be looking for a "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God†;" and he must let it clearly be seen, that he really *is* looking for it. He must let it clearly be seen how deeply his heart feels those great truths, of which he avows his belief. To this end he must make

* 1 Peter, ii. 9. † Heb. ii. 10.

religion his grand and principal concern. He must let it appear that the interests of his soul are those nearest to his heart. He must readily make every sacrifice which conscience demands. He must cheerfully submit to all the difficulties, the reproaches, and even the losses, which he may be called upon in the path of duty to undergo. In the choice of his habitation, and of his employment (so far as it is in his power to choose), he must decidedly show, that he is governed by religious considerations. He must not *prefer*, for the sake of his temporal benefit, to dwell in a place, where he cannot enjoy spiritual advantage, nor to follow a business, which manifestly is hurtful to the good of his soul. In like manner, in the management of his worldly affairs, he must let it be clearly seen that he is not influenced by a worldly mind: that his heart is not upon earth: that he pursues his worldly calling from a principle of duty, not from a sordid love of gain: and that, in truth, his treasures are in heaven. He must therefore not only "provide things honest in the sight of all men;" not only avoid every thing which is fraudulent and unjust in his dealings with others; not only openly protest against those iniquitous practices which the custom of trade too

frequently countenances and approves, but also, he must, "let his *moderation* be known unto all men." He must not push his gains with seeming eagerness, even to the utmost lawful extent. He must exercise forbearance. He must be content with moderate profits. He must sometimes even forego advantages, which in themselves he might innocently take, lest he should seem to give any ground for suspecting, that his heart is secretly set upon these things. Thus also with respect to worldly pleasures, he must endeavour to convince men that the pleasures which religion furnishes, are far greater than those which the world can yield. While, therefore, he conscientiously keeps from joining in those trifling and too often profane amusements, in which ungodly men profess to seek their happiness, he must yet labour to show, that in keeping from these things, he is, in respect to real happiness, no loser, but even a gainer by religion. He must avoid every thing which may look like moroseness and gloom. He must cultivate a cheerfulness of spirit. He must aim to show in his whole deportment that contentment and tranquillity, which naturally flow from heavenly affections, from a mind at peace with GOD, and from a hope full of immortality. In these

respects, then, let his light shine before men.

In the second place, the duty enjoined in the text requires an habitual *holiness* of life. By holiness is meant an abhorrence of every thing which is sinful, and a decided separation from it. The true Christian must obey the call, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate: touch not the unclean thing." * He must be exemplary "in all holy conversation and godliness." He must oppose sin, and protest against it in whatever shape it may appear. He must "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." By his admonition, by his authority, he must check and discountenance every ungodly practice in others. In his own conduct he must be perfectly free from all impurity, excess, and sensuality. "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." † Does the professed disciple of Christ give way to fleshly lusts? Does he even occasionally "run with others to the same excess of riot?" This is not to "let his light shine before men," but to show that the light within him is darkness. This is

* 2 Cor. vi. 17. † Isaiah, lii. 2.—2 Tim. ii. 19.

not to adorn, but to disgrace the doctrine of God, his Saviour. This is not to exalt, but to lower religion in the eyes of the world. Let the true Christian watchfully keep from every thing which in the slightest degree can lead to such consequences. Let him flee from fleshly lusts. Let him follow after holiness. Finally, "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise," let him think of, let him practise, these things.*

But farther, another important branch of this duty consists in the proper government of the temper. Perhaps in no one point does the Christian let his light shine before men with greater effect, than in showing that he lives under the habitual influence of a Christian spirit. The spirit which Christianity enjoins and produces, is so widely different from the spirit of the world, and so immensely superior to it, that as it cannot fail of being noticed, so it cannot fail of being admired even by those who are strangers to its power. Do you ask in what particulars this spirit shows itself? I answer,

* Philip. iv. 8.

in the exercise of humility, of meekness, of gentleness; in a patient bearing of injuries; in a readiness to forgive offences; in an uniform endeavour to overcome evil with good; in self-denial and disinterestedness; in universal kindness and courtesy; in slowness to wrath; in an unwillingness to hear or to speak evil of others; in a forwardness to defend, to advise, and to assist them; in loving our enemies; in blessing them that curse us; in doing good to them that hate us. These are genuine fruits of true Christianity. These are fruits which can really grow on no other tree: for they are the blessed effects of that Holy Spirit who is "given to them that believe." In the exercise of these heavenly tempers the Christian Character shines forth with the brightest lustre. In these heavenly tempers, then, the Christian must especially labour to excel. Would he glorify his Father which is in heaven, he must display in his daily conversation these fruits of the Spirit; and thus show forth the power of the Gospel, in renewing the soul of man, and moulding it to the image of that "mind which was in Christ Jesus."

I shall mention only one other branch of the precept in the text.

The Christian must "let his light shine

before men," by discharging in a faithful, a diligent, and a consistent manner, the personal and particular duties of his station.

As a *Member of Society*, he must be distinguished by a blameless and an inoffensive conduct; by a simplicity and an ingenuousness of character, free from every degree of guile; by uprightness and fidelity in all his engagements.

As a *Subject*, he must be orderly, peaceable, submissive. He must render to all their due, "tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom." He must cheerfully pay his full share to the public expenses. He must obey magistrates, and them that have the rule over him. He must not indulge "in railing accusation" against his superiors, but by contributing all in his power to the support of civil government, he must show his grateful sense of the blessings which he receives from it.

As a *Member of the Church of Christ*, he must show love and good-will to all the other members of the same body. However in some points they may differ from him in judgement, or in forms, he is not on that account to shut them out from his heart; or to suppose that such a difference is any ground of enmity against them. At the same time, he must not needlessly, or on

slight grounds, create or countenance dissensions in the church. He must endeavour to promote and to maintain peace, order, and unity, in the body of Christ.

As a *Neighbour*, he must be kind, friendly, and accommodating. He must show that he has a regard for others as well as for himself, that he respects and consults their happiness and interests equally with his own. He must be no backbiter, slanderer, nor evil-speaker. His discourse must be mild and instructive. He must labour to prevent quarrels, to reconcile those who differ, to comfort the afflicted. In short, he must be "ready for every good work," and all his dealings with others must show the heavenly principle which dwells and works in his heart.

Is he a *Father?* He must be distinguished by a proper regard to the eternal interests of his children; by bringing them up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" by early training them to habits of industry, honesty, sobriety, and submission; and in all circumstances by preferring the good of their souls to that of their bodies.

Is he a *Son?* He must show the excellence of his principles, "by loving, honouring, and succouring both his father and mother;" by consulting their ease and happiness;

by listening to their advice; by submitting in all lawful things to their commands; by contributing to their wants; by bearing with their infirmities; by drawing a veil over their faults.

Is he a *Master?* Here also his Christian character must shine forth. He must be kind both to the bodies and to the souls of his servants. He must endeavour to maintain good order among them. He must not exact their labour with severity, nor treat them with harshness. He must not knowingly permit evil among them; and must be as ready to reprove them for offences committed against God, as for offences committed against himself.

Is he a *Servant?* As a servant let him "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour." Let him be "obedient unto his own master, and please him well in all things, not answering again, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity." Let him perform his work, "not with eye-service, as a man-pleaser, but as the servant of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will, doing service as to the Lord, and not to men." *

Is he a *Husband?* Here also let his light shine before men. Let him promote the

* Titus, ii. 9.—Ephes. vi. 6, 7.

spiritual, as well as the temporal good of his wife. Let him consult her happiness, share in her troubles, and help to diminish her labours. — Need I stop to observe, that, in substance, all these directions equally belong also to the other sex? Let those women "who profess godliness" prove the sincerity of their profession by discharging, in a consistent manner, the several duties of wives, of mothers, of daughters, of mistresses of families, of servants. Let all these, in their respective stations, put on "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit: which is in the sight of God of great price." * Thus let them adorn the Gospel, and win many to Christ.

But to bring the subject to a close, I shall only add under this head, that while the Christian thus lets his light shine before men, he must be careful to keep within the limits of his proper place. He must discharge all these duties with an especial regard to that particular station, in which the Lord has placed him. It is this which crowns the whole, and gives perfection and beauty to the Christian character. Without this, in fact, the ends so much to be desired, will be entirely lost. Does the professed disciple of Christ intrude beyond his proper

* 1 Peter, iii. 4.

line of duty? Does he meddle with matter in which he has no concern? Does he push himself into situations or employments for which he is neither designed nor qualified? Such conduct will very much lessen, nay, may utterly destroy, all the good which his example, however otherwise unblamable and even excellent, might have done. In the eyes of those who are disposed to judge him most charitably, he will appear at the best to be carried away by "a zeal without knowledge." But in the opinion of the more numerous part of mankind, who are far from being inclined to show favour to a religious character, his injudicious conduct will be considered as springing from presumption, from officiousness, from impatience of control, or from a secret desire of introducing confusion and disorder. It is true that they may mistake his motive. But he clearly gives too just ground for the mistake. So that in acting thus, far from "letting his light *shine* before men," he, in fact, darkens it; he dims the brightness of his character; and instead of winning others to Christ by his example, helps to drive them from him. "Let all things be done decently and in order."* For God is the God, not of confusion, but of order.

* 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

Having thus stated some particulars of the duty enjoined in the text, it now only remains, my brethren, to press you earnestly to the discharge of it. If you are truly Christians (and with such only can there be a hope of prevailing) you cannot but see, you cannot but feel the force of the argument in the text. If you have yourselves tasted that the Lord is gracious, you cannot but wish to bring others to share his grace. If you have seen his glory, as it shines forth in the Gospel, you cannot but desire to make that glory known, to exalt and magnify it yourselves, to bring others to exalt and magnify it. You have been shown, then, *how* these desires and wishes may be gratified. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works." Thus shall you glorify God. Thus shall you lead others to glorify him also. There is not one among the meanest, the poorest, the weakest Christians, but may do this. Though you may be cut off from almost all other means of rendering glory to God, you may yet render it to him by your good example. By your good example you may be instrumental in saving a fellow-sinner. By your good example you certainly will strengthen the hands of your ministers; will enliven their hopes; will cheer their hearts;

and will cause all the Lord's people to rejoice. What need I say more? Go, my brethren, go forth under the sense of these most weighty truths. Be burning and shining lights. "Be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation; among whom ye shine as lights in the world: holding forth the word of life." * And may the God of all peace keep you to his heavenly kingdom!

* Philip. ii. 15, 16.

SERMON XVI.

THE WORLD OVERCOME BY FAITH.

1 JOHN, v. 4.

This is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith.

THERE are three great enemies to our salvation, — the devil, the world, and the flesh. "Our adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour." He is ever watchful, and labouring to draw us into sin. The chief source from which he draws his temptations is the world: while we have within us an evil heart, too ready to listen and to yield to such temptations. So that, in fact, to overcome the world, is at the same time to overcome the devil and the flesh; it is at once to defeat the tempter, and to deny ourselves. This victory, then, over the world, may, with great reason, be set forth as a decisive mark of the true Christian, who by his own profession is "manfully to

fight under the banner of Christ against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end."

It is this victory of which St. John speaks in the text. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our Faith." The subject is one of very great importance to the Christian; and in discoursing on it from these words, I shall take occasion to show three things: —

I. What is meant by overcoming the World.

II. That the Instrument which overcomes the World is Faith.

III. How Faith obtains this Victory.

I. By the World is here meant all that is in the world; the things of the world, and the men of the world: "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life *:" all those gratifications which the world offers to our sensual, to our covetous, or to our ambitious inclinations. To overcome the world is so to withstand these tempting offers, as neither to have our hearts entangled, nor our conduct governed by them. It is to go on in the path of holy obedience, notwithstanding all opposition from the things of the world; neither drawn

* 1 John, ii. 16.

into sin by its promises on the one hand, nor driven from our duty by its threatenings on the other. In short, the man who overcomes the world, is one who gets the better both of his natural love of the world, and of his natural fear of it; of his natural love of its honour, riches, pleasures, and friendship, and of his natural fear of its crosses, hatred, and contempt.

The Scriptures furnish many instances of persons who have thus overcome the world. Their examples will enable us still more clearly to perceive what this victory is. When Abraham, at the divine command, left his country, and family, and friends, and went "out, not knowing whither he went, and sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country *," he overcame the world. When Moses willingly gave up the pleasures of a court and the honours of a kingdom, and "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God †," he overcame the world. When Paul and the other apostles "endured such a great fight of afflictions;" submitted to be reviled and persecuted, to suffer hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, and even "to be always delivered unto death ‡," they overcame the

* Hebrews, xi. 8, 9. † Hebrews, xi. 25.
‡ 2 Cor. iv. 10.

world. In these several instances we see that the persons mentioned were not prevailed on by worldly considerations to turn from the path of duty. Whether the world smiled or frowned on them; whether it approved or condemned their conduct; whether they were gainers or losers in the world; this was not the thing which they took into account. They were men, indeed, of like passions with ourselves; and as such, they must have felt as we should feel in like situations and circumstances. To incur scorn and ridicule, to be torn from their families and homes, to renounce wealth and honour, and to suffer poverty, pain, and persecution, were trials, which, doubtless, were as severe to them as they would be to us. They could not but feel these things. Mark, however, their conduct. They suffered not their feelings to prevail over their sense of duty. They did not govern their actions by what the world said or thought of them; by what it did; by what it tempted them to do, or threatened to do against them. None of these things moved them. They overcame the world. I show,

II. That the Instrument which overcomes the World is Faith.

Great things are spoken in Scripture of Faith; and great works are said to be done

by it. It is "*by faith* that we live." It is "*through faith* that we are saved." We are "justified *by faith*." "We are sanctified *by faith*." It is "*faith*, which purifies the heart." It is "*faith*, which works by love." * And here we are further told, that it is "*faith* which overcomes the world." What then is this wonderful Instrument, by which such mighty works are done? — What is the faith, of which such great things are spoken? Faith, in general, is a dependence on the testimony of another. It is the relying on his word for the truth of what he reports. If we believe what he says; if we give credit to any fact which he relates; if we trust to any promise which he makes, we may then be said to have faith in his word. Now the faith of which we speak, is a dependence on the testimony of GOD. It is a relying on the truth of *His* word. It is a firm persuasion that what He says is true, what He foretells will come to pass. And hence we may observe how wicked in itself, as well as hateful to GOD, is unbelief; for it directly strikes at his truth, that glorious perfection of his character. Unbelief dishonours GOD, by making him a

* Heb. x. 38.—Ephes. ii. 8.—Rom. iii. 28.—Acts, xxvi. 18.; xv. 9.—Gal. v. 6.

liar, by saying that his word is not to be trusted, that no credit is to be given to his threatenings, no dependence to be placed on his promises. Hence also we may farther observe, that as unbelief is most wicked and hateful, so also it is most unreasonable. For what can be more unreasonable than to deny or doubt the word of Him who is truth itself? Faith builds its trust on that, which reason cannot but approve as the safest of all grounds, the truth and faithfulness of God. On the other hand, let us not suppose, that divine faith is the work merely of human reason. This is not the case. Such a belief as human reason alone could produce, would never do the mighty works which faith is said to do. It might convince the understanding; but it would never touch or influence the heart. The faith which must do this, though it agree with human reason, yet springs from a higher source. It comes down from above. It is a divine work, wrought not by reason, but by the Spirit of God. It is a grace, implanted and seated in the soul. It is a heavenly principle fixed and working in the heart: the gift and operation of God. This is faith; that faith, of which such glorious things are spoken: The Christian's "shield," as the Apostle calls it, "wherewith he is able to quench all

the fiery darts of the wicked*; the instrument, as we see in the text, which overcometh the world. Look at the instances which have been already noticed, of persons who have obtained this victory, and you will find that the instrument by which they obtained it was the one here mentioned. This was the victory which overcame the world, even their faith. It was "by *faith* that Abraham, when he was called to go out unto a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither he went."† It was by *faith* that Moses when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter."‡ It was through "the same spirit of *faith* §," that St. Paul and the other apostles fainted not at their manifold tribulations. In these several instances the persons described believed in GOD, accounted him faithful to his word, and were fully persuaded, that what he had said, he would surely bring to pass. Under this persuasion they acted; this persuasion, this faith it was, that led them to overcome the temptations by which they were beset; that enabled them to get the better both of their natural love

* Ephes. vi. 16.
† Heb. xi. 8.
‡ Heb. xi. 24.
§ 2 Cor. iv. 13.

of the world, and of their natural fear of it. Let us see,

III. How Faith obtains this Victory.

Every instrument which GOD appoints or uses, is most wisely fitted to the end designed. Thus it is with faith. It is employed to subdue in the hearts of men, their natural love and fear of the present evil world. And how does it do this? By opening to their views a future and more valuable world. *Why* did Abraham "sojourn in the land of promise, as in a strange country?" Because by faith, "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is GOD." * *Why* did Moses "choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of GOD, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season?" Because by faith he saw that these pleasures were only "for a season," and that "the reproach of Christ was greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of reward." † *Why* did St. Paul and the other apostles faint not at their tribulations? Because by faith they saw, that their "light affliction, which was but for a moment, worked for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while they looked not at the things

* Heb. xi. 10. † Heb. xi. 25, 26.

which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."* In all these instances faith overcame this world by making known another. And thus it does in every instance in which it obtains the victory. Whence comes it, that men are naturally so devoted to the world? so desirous of the good, so afraid of the evil, which it sets before them? Because naturally they see nothing beyond this world. "The god of this world has blinded their eyes." The mind is darkened, and reaches not to unseen and spiritual things. But faith, when it comes, takes away this darkness; opens the eye of the mind; discloses to it a new world; brings unseen things to sight; and gives to spiritual things substance and reality. And what a wonderful change is thus brought about in the apprehensions and judgement of the soul! Standing, as it were, on *new* ground, and seeing every object in a *new* light, it learns to value every thing in a *new* way. It once thought highly of this world, of its riches, its pleasures, and its friendship. It judged these things deserving of all its care, and followed them with all its might. But it now sees them in their true colours. It sees that, compared with unseen things, they are but vanity: that all

* 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

the *riches* of the world cannot profit a man if he should lose himself or be cast away; that the *pleasures* of the world are deceitful and perishing, and lead in the end to shame and misery; that "the *friendship* of the world is enmity with GOD."

Thus are the affections gradually weaned from worldly things; while other objects of real value and infinite importance are presented to the view; — the favour of GOD; a life of communion with him; a blessed death; a crown of righteousness; a glorious immortality; above all, *that* object, which before every other demands unceasing gratitude, love, and admiration, — the great mystery of redemption, "God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;" the love of the Father in giving his Son for sinners; the love of the Incarnate Son in dying for them on the cross. This glorious object, when seen by the eye of faith, completes the victory over the love of the world. *Here* men see the world in its true light and character, as the crucifier of the Son of GOD. Henceforth they love it no longer; "the world is crucified unto them, and they unto the world." — In the same manner faith overcomes their natural fear of the world. Formerly they were afraid of undergoing poverty, pain, or sorrow. They

were afraid of being pointed at as precise and singular, and of incurring the reproach and ridicule of the world. But faith has taught them better things. It has opened their eyes to see the folly of such fears. It shows them that they "who sow in tears shall reap in joy;" that "blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." It assures them that "if they be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are they;" that, if they "are persecuted for righteousness' sake, they are blessed; for great is their reward in heaven;" that, "if they suffer with Christ, they shall also reign with him." * — Especially, faith sets before them the true object of their fear, not men, but GOD: not *men*, who "can kill the body," but after that have no more that they can do; but *God*, "who after He has killed, has power to cast into hell." Faith bids them to fear *Him;* to fear his wrath and judgements; to fear the loss of their souls, the coming short of the great salvation of the Gospel, the being ashamed of Christ, the doing despite unto the Spirit of grace. And the fear of these things overcomes the fear of the world. — Its opposition no longer

* Psalm cxxvi. 5. — Matt. v. 4. 10. — 1 Peter, iv. 14. — 2 Tim. i. 12.

terrifies. Its scorn and enmity are no longer regarded. The emptiness of its threatenings, the weakness of its rage are clearly seen. Nor can any of these things any more prevent the soul from habitually striving to walk in the path of duty, and to live unto GOD. — Thus faith obtains its victory.

By way of application, my brethren, let me ask, do you thus overcome the world? The question is most important. For remember what St. John says immediately before the text, that "whatsoever is born of GOD overcometh the world." If you do not overcome it, you are not born of Him. Let me then press upon you two leading inquiries on this subject; and may God give you grace to see that you are indeed His children!

1. Do you overcome the world as to its cares, business, and employments? On this point let me be clearly understood. To discharge with fidelity and diligence the work of that station in which God has placed you, is a part of the service which you owe to him. The proper management of your worldly business, the doing all that is right and in your power, for the support and maintenance of yourselves and families, and the attending to the concerns of your particular calling, are duties which the

Gospel of Christ commands you to perform. But the question is, with what *views*, and *temper*, and *spirit*, do you perform them? Do you look upon them as your first and great concern; your *main point*, as they are frequently called? Do you give to them the chief place in your heart? Do you perform them merely for their own sake, for the worldly advantages which they hold out to you, and without a regard to any higher principle or end? It is not the being engaged in worldly concerns, that proves a man to be the slave of the world, but the being engaged in them with a *worldly spirit*. If your heart be set on the world, you clearly have not overcome it. Consider, then, when engaged in your worldly callings, on which do you place your heart, on GOD, or on the world? Which do you most value and seek, his favour or your worldly interests? When you must sacrifice one of them, which do you give up? Do you never pursue your worldly interests by means which you know to be unlawful and displeasing to GOD? Do you never neglect your known duty to him, with the view of thereby gaining some little temporal advantage? And when you meet with losses and disappointments in your worldly concerns, how do you bear them? Do you be-

tray such impatience and grief, as plainly show how near these concerns are to your heart? Or do you submit to them with resignation and humility, remembering, that *your* treasure is in heaven, and saying with holy Job under his heavier trials, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord?"

2. Do you overcome the world, as to its evil customs, maxims, and examples? To do a thing because others do it, is an excuse which numbers plead for acting contrary to the voice of conscience, and the word of God. They would not appear singular; they would not be called unsocial; therefore they do as the world does. Now in things which, on due consideration, we are satisfied are innocent in themselves and also to us, to do as the world does, to follow its customs, and adopt its manners, is a part of that wisdom which teaches us to avoid the needless giving of offence. Though even here there is danger against which we must guard. There is a danger, lest the habit of following the world in things which are indifferent, should lead us in the end to follow it in things which are *not* indifferent. And this danger we shall scarcely avoid, if we are *very anxious* to do *exactly* as the world does in every thing, which is even lawful

and innocent. But to be guilty of *sinful* compliances, to "follow the multitude in doing *evil*," this is a criminal conformity to the world, and proves that you do not overcome it. Do you then dare to do what is right, notwithstanding the many bad examples around you? Do you withstand the persuasions of ungodly companions, and the opposition of irreligious friends? Are you proof against the heavy attacks of reproach and ridicule? Are you not ashamed of Christ and his Gospel? Are you not afraid of professing your faith in Him before the face of a sinful generation? Do you bear to be laughed at; to be evil spoken of; to be loaded, it may be, with disgraceful names? Do none of these *so* move you, as to prevent you from doing that which your conscience and the Bible tell you to be right?

In putting, however, these questions, I would observe, my brethren, that it is not a perfect victory which I can suppose any of you to have gained. In this Christian attainment, as in every other, you will find yourselves falling very far short of perfection. In this, however, as in every other, the nearer you come to perfection, the greater will be your peace and happiness. Many lose much of the comforts of religion by suffering the world to keep some power

over them. If they do not altogether serve the world, yet they do not overcome it in the degree in which they ought. — See then, the importance and necessity of faith; of a strong, a lively, and an active faith; for exactly in proportion to the degree of our faith, will be the degree in which we overcome the world. If our faith be weak, our opposition to the world will be feeble, and our success against it at the best be little and doubtful. If our faith be strong, we shall fight manfully against the world, and our victory over it will be decisive and clear. — Pray then for faith; for an increase of faith; for the strengthening of your faith. "Look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith." Looking unto Him, be of good cheer; for He "has overcome the world."* Go forth in his strength, and you shall overcome it also.

* John, xvi. 33.

SERMON XVII.

BLESSEDNESS OF THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS.

MATTHEW, v. 6.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after Righteousness; for they shall be filled.

ALL men wish to be happy: but none naturally know how to become so. They have false notions about happiness; and seek it where it never can be found. Ask them, 'Who are happy?' They will tell you, 'The *great*, the *rich*, the *gay*: those who 'have every thing which this world can give, 'and who spend their lives in pleasure and 'enjoyment.' Ask them, 'How they hope 'to become happy themselves?' they will tell you, 'By becoming rich or great; by 'heaping up worldly things; by living in 'ease and indulgence.'

But, my brethren, these notions are as dangerous as they are false; for they set the soul on a vain and ruinous pursuit: nor shall we ever be truly happy, till we better understand what true happiness is. When Christ, therefore, came into the world, he began with setting men right on this point. In his well-known Sermon on the Mount, he plainly told the people, in what true happiness was placed, where it is to be found, and who those are that have already found it, or are in the way to find it. What he teaches on this subject is, indeed, very contrary to our natural ideas; and when we hear him say, "Blessed are the *poor in spirit*," — "Blessed are they that *mourn*," — "Blessed are they which are *persecuted* for righteousness' sake*," — we may perhaps be tempted to ask, "How can these things be?"

Let us, however, remember, that these are the very sayings of Him, who is "the Way, the *Truth*, and the Life†," of Him who, from love to our souls, came down from heaven that he might teach us the way to heaven. Let us then receive his words with thankfulness, with humility, and with faith; and instead of doubting their truth, endeavour to understand them to our profit.

* Matt. v. 3, 4. 10. † John, xiv. 6.

May such at this time be the case with the particular passage which I have chosen for the text; and which is one of those very sayings of CHRIST, in which he teaches us what true happiness is. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled."

Let us in these words inquire,

I. Who are the Persons here mentioned as Blessed.

II. In what respect they are Blessed.

I. The Persons mentioned as Blessed are thus described: "They hunger and thirst after righteousness." It is plain that these words are spoken not of the body, but of the soul. It is also plain what the words thus spoken mean. If we are told that any person *hungered* or *thirsted* after such or such a thing, we should at once know what was meant. We should know it was meant, that he had a strong desire after the thing mentioned, and was very anxious to obtain it. To *thirst for blood*, to *thirst for revenge*, are ways of speaking not uncommon among us, and understood by all. So that, in short, the words *hungering* or *thirsting*, when spoken of the soul, mean the strong desires and longings of the soul: its earnest wishes for something, without which it will no more be satisfied

than the body, when hungry or thirsty, will be satisfied without food or drink. Thus far, then, what is said of the persons in the text, may be said of all men. For all men have something in view, which they earnestly long after, and anxiously desire to obtain. Every soul thus in some way or other, *hungers* and *thirsts*. But what makes the grand difference between the persons spoken of in the text, and all other persons whatever, is the thing for which this anxious desire is felt. All other persons hunger and thirst — But after *what?* After some worldly thing; some earthly, perishable thing. Riches, power, glory, ease, pleasure, these are the things for which they long: these are the things which they earnestly covet, and eagerly follow. But it is not thus with the persons who are said in the text to be Blessed. The things for which they feel so strong a desire are not earthly, but heavenly; not worldly, but spiritual; not perishable, but eternal. — They "hunger and thirst after *Righteousness.*" They set their affections on things *above*. They are "athirst for GOD." To "win Christ, and to be found in him;" to "know Christ, and the power of his resurrection;" to obtain "the salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory;" this is in their eyes "the one thing need-

ful;" this is the prize for which they run; the hope which they set before them; the only reward which can satisfy the desires and longings of their soul."

Such, in general, are the persons spoken of in the text as Blessed. But let us now come to particulars. — By *righteousness* we may here chiefly understand *holiness*. And what is holiness? It is that one thing, "without which," as St. Paul tells us, "no man shall see the Lord." It is, in fact, that likeness to God, which only can fit us for living in his presence, and for enjoying the company of saints and angels. An unholy person must be miserable; for being unlike to God, and so unfit for heaven, he must of necessity be for ever shut out from the happiness of that blessed place. Now the persons of whom we are speaking, know this to be the case. They know, that if they continue to be unholy, they must be miserable. What, therefore, they long for, what they hunger and thirst after, is to be holy; to be made like God, and so to become fit for heaven. This is the strong desire of their heart. Let us see how this desire shows itself, and what it leads them to do.

In the first place, they bitterly grieve that they are so unholy. The corruption of

their heart is a sore trouble, and a heavy burden to them. They find that when they would do good, evil is present with them. They cannot keep away bad thoughts so constantly as they would wish to do. They cannot get the better of bad tempers so completely as they desire to do. They cannot love and obey GOD, and hate and overcome sin so entirely as they long to do. When they would pray to GOD, or hear or read the Scriptures, or do any spiritual duty, they often find their minds dull, and heavy, and dead. Even though the spirit, through grace, be willing, yet the flesh is weak; so that the good which they would, they do not; but the evil which they would not, that they do. Now all this is a great concern, and grief to them. They oftentimes groan, being burdened. They go mourning even all the day long; and are ready to cry out with St. Paul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"*

My brethren, are there not some of you, who know what this concern, this trouble is? Are there not some of you, who feel as these persons feel: who grieve, as these persons grieve, because you are so unholy, and find so much evil in your hearts, and

* Romans, vii. 24.

love GOD so coldly, and do him so little service? It is to be hoped that there is many a heart which at this moment is saying to itself, 'I know what all this means. 'These are my feelings. I desire above all 'things to be holy. It is my most earnest 'wish to love GOD with all my soul; to 'shut out of my heart every evil thought; 'to cleanse myself from all filthiness of the 'flesh and spirit. Alas! that I cannot 'do thus, is my shame and my grief. He 'who knows my heart, knows how many 'bitter pangs I feel, because I am so little 'what I ought to be. He who sees in se-'cret, sees how many tears I shed on ac-'count even of those sins, which no eye but 'his beholds. O how I longed to be loosed 'from the chains of sin! What joy would it 'be to me to have the Spirit of Christ ever 'in my heart, bending my will to his, and 'making me pure, even as he is pure!'

Now, my brethren, all, whether many or few, whose hearts thus speak, have so far reason to hope that they are the persons mentioned in the text. This language and these feelings, are the language and the feelings of those who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness. — I say, *so far* they have reason to hope: for this is not all. It is not enough, that a man knows and laments

the evil of his heart. That strong desire after holiness, of which we are speaking, will lead those who feel it, not only to grieve that they are so unholy, but,

In the second place, to *strive* and to strive *earnestly* that they may become holy. Hunger and thirst are appetites too strong to be denied or trifled with. The man who feels them will not be content merely with wishing for something to gratify them, or with lamenting his want of it. He will strive to obtain it. He will use his utmost endeavours to obtain it. He will not be satisfied without obtaining it; nor will he put up with any thing else in the room of it. — Thus it is with the soul, which hungers and thirsts after holiness. It *longs* to be holy, and therefore it *strives* to be holy. It does not content itself with empty wishes and vain lamentations. It *labours* after holiness. It earnestly prays for grace to be kept from evil, and to be strengthened for every good work. It watches and fights against sin. It shuns such places and companies, and practices, as may be likely to draw it into sin. It denies the flesh. It mortifies the deeds of the body. It daily takes up the cross and follows Christ. — If it should be said to a person, whose soul is thus athirst after holiness, 'You are taking

'too much pains in this matter. You are 'too severe, and self-denying, and scru- 'pulous. Give yourself a little ease. Take 'a little indulgence. Think how much 'you are hurting yourself by this unne- 'cessary strictness. How many friends 'you are offending. How much gain you 'are losing. Attend more to your own in- 'terests. Eat, drink, and be merry.'— Would he listen to such advice? Would he be prevailed on by such reasoning to take less care of his soul, and to become less strict and scrupulous? No. He would say, 'The things which you offer me are not 'the things which I want. I value them 'not. I desire them not. I long to be holy 'that I may be like GOD, and so may be fit 'for Heaven. This is my desire; a desire 'which the world, with all its gains and 'pleasures, cannot satisfy. If I had them 'all, I should yet be empty; for they can- 'not fill my soul, nor keep it at last from 'miserably perishing.'

And here again, my brethren, may we not hope, that some would speak this language also? May we not hope that some are so hungering and thirsting after holiness, that they can take up with nothing else? that none of the things which the devil, the world, or the flesh set before them,

can satisfy their desires, or turn them from their purpose of dying unto sin, of living unto God, of daily growing in grace, and becoming fitter for Heaven? — If this be the case with you, my friends, you have indeed great reason to rejoice: for you are, in truth, the *very* persons mentioned in the text. You are those whom Christ himself has called blessed. "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness."

Let us enquire,

II. In what respects they are blessed.

In beginning this enquiry, there is one observation which may be profitably stated. To be blessed, is to be in a truly happy condition. But it is not necessary for a man who is blessed, to *know* that he is in this condition. He may be in a truly happy state without *feeling* that he is so. You would say, that the criminal, whose pardon is sealed, is in a happy state, though at present he may know nothing of the mercy shown to him. You would say, that the sick man, who is no longer in danger of dying, is in a happy condition, though as yet he may himself be utterly ignorant of the favourable turn in his disorder. Let no one, therefore, say, 'I am not one of the persons spoken of 'in the text, because I do not *find* myself 'to be truly happy. I have many doubts

'and fears about my salvation. I am weary 'and heavy laden because of my sins. How 'then can I be said to be truly happy? If 'I were blessed, I should *feel* myself to be 'so.'—Such reasoning is nothing at all to the purpose. Whether you are blessed or not, does not depend upon what you think or feel on the subject. Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness are Blessed.—Not because they *now find* themselves to be truly happy,—but because they have a *sure promise that they shall be so hereafter.* This is the reason given in the text. "They shall be filled." Mistake not, however, my meaning. I mean not to say, that they have no happiness at present; or that they are even generally unhappy here. This would be a very false view of their state. For even now the Lord "filleth the hungry with good things." He "maketh them to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth them beside the still waters."* They find the ways of righteousness to be, on the whole, ways of "pleasantness and peace;" and would not exchange their present comfort and happiness for the most inviting pleasures of sin.

But still, after all, it will not be till the next life, that their "joys shall be *full.*"

* Luke i. 53.—Psalm xxiii. 2.

The delights they meet with here are meant only as helps and refreshments by the way, as foretastes and pledges of that happiness to come which they now long for, and shall then perfectly enjoy.—For then "*they shall be filled.*"—Let us see what this promise means.

It means, in the first place, that they shall *have* the things which they long for. They shall not have run in vain. They shall win the prize for which they are striving. Do they now hunger and thirst after Righteousness? They shall obtain righteousness. Do they now prefer heaven to earth, and choose GOD before the world? They shall not lose by their preference, nor repent of their choice. They shall live in heaven, and serve GOD, and see his face for ever. Do they now "count all things but loss, that they may be found in Christ?" They shall be found in Him. Washed in his blood from every stain, they shall stand "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Do they now above all things long for holiness? Is it their earnest desire to be holy as GOD is holy; to be "perfect even as their Father which is in heaven is perfect?" This desire also shall be gratified. At death they shall have done with sin for ever. The flesh will no longer lust against

the spirit. They shall be sanctified wholly; and seeing Christ in glory, "as He is, they shall be like Him."

But the promise in the text has a still further meaning. It means, that those who hunger and thirst after Righteousness, not only shall *have* the things which they long for, but shall also be perfectly *satisfied* with it. It shall come up to, and even go far beyond, their largest wishes. "They shall be *filled*." They shall find the joys of heaven to be full and satisfying. They have chosen GOD for their portion, and they shall find Him to be their exceeding great reward. They shall then feel that perfect holiness is perfect happiness. When they "awake up after GOD's likeness, they shall be satisfied with it." "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the Sun light on them, nor any heat: for the Lamb, which is in the midst of the Throne, shall feed them: and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and GOD shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."*

What glorious truths are these, my brethren! How justly may it be said of the persons in the text, that *they are Blessed!* May all of you, who hunger and thirst after

* Rev. vii. 16, 17.

Righteousness, make that use of these glorious truths, which you ought to make of them! May they comfort and encourage you under present troubles, and stir you up to a patient continuance in well-doing! It is true, that you now labour and strive, but "your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord!" You now "sow in tears;" but you shall "reap in joy." You now "hunger and thirst;" but hereafter, you "shall be filled." You may be tempted to think that your trials are hard. You may be tempted to fear that you shall fail at last. You may be tempted to keep back something which GOD and your conscience bid you to give up. Yield not to these temptations. "Be faithful unto death, and you shall receive a crown of life." Go on in the narrow way of faith and holiness. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left. This narrow way will surely lead to heaven; and heaven will as surely make amends for all that you have lost or suffered on the road. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which GOD hath prepared for them that love Him."* Set these things before you. See them now by faith. Soon you

* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

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shall enter into the full possession and enjoyment of them.

But while the text gives such comfort to those of whom it speaks, what must we say to persons of a contrary character? If we may hope, my brethren, that there are some who hunger and thirst after righteousness, we cannot but fear also, that there are others who hunger and thirst, but not after righteousness; others who are "labouring after the meat which perisheth," not after that meat which endureth unto everlasting life; who are eagerly following some worldly perishable thing, to the neglect of GOD, of their soul, and of eternity.——O that such persons could be convinced of their folly and danger! You are seeking happiness where you can never find it. You are toiling for that which will not repay your labour. You now think that if you could obtain such and such a thing, which you long for, you should be happy. In this uncertain world, it is very probable, that you never may obtain it. But if you should, you will be as far from happiness as you are at present. You will find something still wanting to complete your happiness. For in truth, none of those things which you are seeking, can satisfy the longings of the

soul. Have you not hitherto found this to be the case? Have your plans of worldly happiness answered? Have you ever obtained one single thing, which, when obtained, has made you as happy as you before expected that it would have made you? If one wish has been gratified, has not another been disappointed? If one trouble has been taken away, has not another risen? You have surely found things thus; and thus you must always find them; so long as you hunger and thirst, but not after Righteousness. Be warned by past experience. No longer "spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not. Seek *first* the kingdom of GOD and his Righteousness." Be concerned for your soul. Make it your grand business to provide for another life. So shall you find rest and peace here, and happiness and glory hereafter.

If you reject this advice, tremble for the consequences. The rich man, who received his "good things" in this world, was tormented in the next. So will it surely be with you. Thus saith the Lord GOD, "Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold, my ser-

vants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed; behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit." *

* Isaiah, lxv. 13, 14.

SERMON XVIII.

MUTUAL KNOWLEDGE BETWEEN CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE.

JOHN, X. 14.

I know my sheep, and am known of mine.

THERE is no title given in the Scriptures to Jesus Christ which more clearly shows his tender concern and watchful care for his people, than that of a Shepherd: nor is there any, under which he is more frequently set forth. In the prophecies he is repeatedly spoken of under this character. In the New Testament the same idea is continually presented to us. By St. Paul he is called the "*Great* Shepherd of the Sheep." By St. Peter, the "*Chief* Shepherd." * In the chapter from which the text is taken, Christ declares himself to be "the *Good* Shepherd." Twice, in the short space of a few verses, he takes this title to himself: at the eleventh

* Heb. xiii. 20. — 1 Pet. v. 4.

verse he says, "I am the Good Shepherd," and immediately shows his claim to that title, by the clearest proof. "The Good Shepherd giveth his life for the Sheep."—Again he says, at the fourteenth verse, "I am the Good Shepherd," and instantly adds, "and know my sheep, and am known of mine." The knowledge which he has of his sheep, is a farther proof of his being the "Good Shepherd:" while the knowledge which they have of Him, enables them to bear witness that he is so. It is on this knowledge between Christ and his people that I purpose on the present occasion to discourse. To this end, let us separately consider the two parts of the text.

I. I know my Sheep.

II. I am known of mine.

I. By the sheep are meant the *true* people of Christ: not all such as call themselves Christians: but those who are really Christians: *those* who, however far off they *once* may have wandered from the fold, "are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls." Of these Christ says, "I know them." There is one sense, in which Christ knows all men: for as GOD, he is present every where. "His eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the

good." Nothing is hidden from him. In this sense, he knows those who are not his people as well as those who are. This then cannot be the only sense in which the expression "I know my sheep," is to be understood: since it is plainly meant that the knowledge, which Christ describes himself as having of his people, is in some sense different from that which he has of them in common with others. We may consider then three respects, in which Christ may be said to *know* his sheep.

1. He sees and distinguishes them with certainty. We may be often at a loss, nay, we may find it utterly impossible to discover, whether a person be a real Christian or not. But Christ has no difficulty of this kind. He sees every heart, and looks through every disguise. No outward appearance can impose upon him, nor lead him to form a wrong judgement of the inward state: and while he clearly detects the hypocrite, under the most plausible profession of religion, he no less clearly discerns the true Christian, under all that load of ignorance, and infirmity, which may sometimes disfigure and oppress him. In any multitude of persons, ever so great, Christ, without any possibility of mistake, perceives *them that are his;* and could in a moment separate

them from those who are not *his*, with as much certainty and ease, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. Let there be only *one* true Christian in the largest congregation ever assembled upon earth, and the Lord's eye is upon him. He distinguishes him from all the rest. Among the many thousand ungodly inhabitants of Sodom, he distinguished the righteous Lot, "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked." Among the irreligious millions of the old world, He distinguished the just and pious Noah. In this sense then Christ says, "I know my sheep." 'However scat-'tered over the face of the earth; however 'mingled among profane scoffers, or spe-'cious hypocrites; in the royal palace, or 'in the humble cottage; in the secret cham-'ber, or in the public assembly: Nathanael 'under the fig-tree, or Jonah in the belly 'of the fish; I see and distinguish my 'people from all others, with unerring 'certainty.'

2. Christ beholds his people with a favourable regard. He not only sees but approves them. They are viewed by him with favour and delight. They are the special objects of his love. He sees in them "the travail of his soul," the fruit of his sufferings, and intercession. The world often-

times overlooks and despises the people of Christ; ranks them with the weak, the foolish, and the mean: and even loads them with disgraceful names, and bitter reproaches. But Christ notices and values them. He deems them the truly honourable and excellent upon earth. He accounts them his jewels; and "graves them upon the palms of his hands."* Oftentimes they are themselves oppressed with fears, and greatly cast down. They deeply feel and lament the depravity of their hearts, and the errors of their lives. They deem themselves unworthy of notice and favour: and perhaps are even sometimes tempted to conclude that the Lord has forgotten them. But the Lord has not forgotten them. He sees, and despises not their broken and contrite hearts. He observes with pleasure their work of faith, their labour of love, their patience of hope: and though he may hide from them the light of his countenance, yet he still continues secretly to rejoice over them as "the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand." In this respect also Christ may truly be understood to say, "I know my sheep."

3. He hath an intimate acquaintance with the spiritual state of his people, and a ten-

* Isaiah, xlix. 16.

der concern for their spiritual interests. He knows the circumstances of each individual among them: his wants and sorrows: the trials and temptations to which he is particularly exposed; and the peculiar support and consolation of which he stands in need. He sees those infirmities which his people lament, and those sinful inclinations under which they groan: and is touched with tender compassion for them: and while he chastens and corrects them for their profit, "in all their afflictions he is himself afflicted." He sees the conflict which they are carrying on with their subtle enemy, and with an ensnaring world; and knows how unable they are, in their own strength, to resist and overcome. He knows how to pity and succour them under temptations, seeing "he himself suffered, being tempted." He knows the weakness of their nature; for he himself also "took part of the same;" and, sin only excepted, was "in all things made like unto his brethren."* —In this respect also Christ "knows his sheep."

We now proceed to the second part of the text.

II. "I am known of mine."

Not only does Christ know his sheep, but *they know Him.* And what is meant

* Heb. iii. 17, 18.

by their knowing him? It is not a mere knowledge of his being, his person, and his offices, drawn from the Bible, or from sermons, and placed only in the memory. It is not a mere assent to the things which we are told of Him in the Scriptures. Numbers, who are not Christ's people, know Him in this sense of the word. It is an inward and heartfelt, a practical knowledge of Christ which is here meant. Such a knowledge as can be gained only by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. And in this sense, none but those who are really *his* can know him. Let me point out some few particulars in which this knowledge consists.

1. The people of Christ *know* him as their *Wisdom.* They are sensible that in spiritual things, they are wiser than they formerly were. Once they were living in darkness and ignorance as to heavenly things. They now perceive, that while they thought themselves wise, they were fools. They knew nothing as they ought to have known, of GOD, of themselves, of sin, of the Gospel. But a great change has been wrought in them. Their understandings have been opened. They see things more distinctly than they once did. They have new thoughts of GOD, of their souls,

of salvation. And who has wrought this work in them? Christ. He has taken away the veil from their sight. He has "anointed their eyes with eye-salve, that they may see."* Hence they *know* Him in a way in which others cannot know him. Others may have "*heard* of Him with the hearing of the ear," but these spiritually *see* him. They have now an inward knowledge of Him, to which they once were strangers, and of which others can form no idea. And should any one attempt to reason them out of this knowledge, they would say to him, as the blind man, restored to sight by our Lord, said to the Pharisees who endeavoured to persuade him that he had received no benefit from Jesus, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see."†

2. The people of Christ *know* him as their *Peace*. They have found the power of his blood in cleansing the conscience from guilt, and in speaking peace to the troubled mind. They have been made sensible of their danger as sinners, of the wrath and punishment which they have brought upon themselves; and they have trembled at the thoughts of a judgement to come. Convicted and alarmed, they have looked around for help. And where have they

* Rev. iii. 18.

† John, ix. 25.

found it? In Christ. Looking unto him, they have felt their fears taken away, their burden lightened. In his one sacrifice for sin, they have seen a sufficient atonement for all their sins. By faith they have beheld him bearing their sins in his own body on the tree, and thus by the blood of his Cross, they have found an inward peace and joy which they had in vain sought by other means. Hence they *know* Christ in a manner, in which others, who have never tasted his pardoning love, are unable to know him. They know him as their peace. They know him as their refuge, to which they constantly flee for protection, from the accusations of Satan, and the threatenings of the law. They know him as the fountain in which they daily wash their souls from the guilt of sin. They know him as the Saviour, by a believing trust in whose merits, they are enabled to "go on their way rejoicing."

3. The people of Christ *know* Him as their *Sanctification.* Though they are as yet far from being perfect; and have much sin remaining in them, for which they are greatly grieved and humbled; yet still they are conscious that a very surprising change has been produced in their hearts. They feel that they do not love and serve sin

as they once did. They do not live as they once lived, in the allowed disregard of any known duty. They have been enabled to gain the mastery over some bad habits, some evil tempers; and they have learned to find pleasure and delight in those holy exercises, which they once formally attended, or despised, or hated. Who is it that has done all this for them? Christ. They are sensible that this is His doing; and "it is marvellous in their eyes." It is only since they have been brought to trust on Him, that they have found the corruptions of their hearts in any degree subdued. Formerly, they could occasionally make good resolutions of amendment, and could utter many serious promises of forsaking this or that particular sin, but in the time of temptation, all their good resolutions and serious promises melted away and came to nothing. It is only since Christ has been their "all in all," that they have been able to stand. Nay, even now they are taught by a daily sense of their own weakness, to feel the reality and importance of his promised help. When they attempt any thing in their own strength, they are sure to fail; but when they go forth trusting on his grace; then they find, that "his strength is made perfect in their weakness;" and that they

"can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth them." Thus they "know Christ, and the power of his resurrection." *

4. The people of Christ *know* him as their *Consolation*. Many, it may be, are their afflictions: but in Him they find a sure support in every time of need. Other things may fail. Riches may flee away. Earthly friends may prove unkind, or by death may be torn from them. Worldly prospects may change. But Christ changeth not. He never fails his people. In him they find a constant source of consolation. When every other door of hope has been shut, they have looked to him, and have received comfort. They have found him faithful to his promises. In their distress they have cried to him, and have been holpen. They have prayed to him, and have found an answer to their prayer. Many a time, it may be, they have been "in heaviness through manifold temptations," but Christ hath cheered them with the light of his countenance, and in due time hath delivered them out of all their troubles. Many a time, it may be, they have been forced to make painful sacrifices for his sake: but he has shown himself mindful of his word, and

* Philip. iii. 10.

by his inward consolations has abundantly compensated the losses which he has called them to endure. Thus can they say with St. Paul, "We know in whom we have believed;" while in the experience of past mercies they can also add with the Apostle, "and are persuaded that he is able to keep that which we have committed to him."*

In these respects Christ may truly be understood to say, "I am known of mine."

By way of application on this subject, let me enquire, my brethren, do you know Christ? This is not a trifling question, but one which you are greatly concerned to answer to yourselves. Christ himself, when praying to his Father, says, "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true GOD, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."† And St. Paul tells us, that he "counted all things but loss for the excellency of the *knowledge* of Christ Jesus his Lord."‡ What then is *your* knowledge of Christ? Do you know him as your *Wisdom?* Has he opened your eyes? By his Spirit has he convinced you of sin: shown to you the evil of your heart: and taught you to see his value and his suitableness to your necessities? Do you know him as your *Peace?* Is all your hope placed entirely on Him? Do

* 2 Tim. i. 12. † John, xvii. 3. ‡ Philip. iii. 8.

you find that nothing will give peace to your soul but a believing trust in the blood of Jesus? — Do you know Him as your *Sanctification?* On carefully looking into your heart, are you conscious of any "good work", which has been wrought there? Can you with truth say, 'Through the power 'of Christ, I have been enabled to subdue 'that unlawful propensity; to amend that 'evil temper; to moderate that worldly 'desire; to conform myself in some little 'measure to his pattern and image?' — Do you know Christ as your *Consolation?* In your disappointments and afflictions, do you fly to him for support and comfort? Do you rest upon Him as your only rock? Do you look unto him alone, as the "hill from whence cometh your help?" "Casting all your care upon Him," do you find something of that "peace of God, which passeth all understanding," keeping and ruling your heart and mind? — Without *thus* in some degree *knowing* Christ, you have reason to suspect, that you are not as yet one of his sheep: for his sheep *do know* Him. How then can you be one of his, if you know Him not? But consider, if you be not one of Christ's sheep, in what a state you then are. You have no interest in the care and mercy of the good Shepherd. He has laid down

his life for the sheep: but you are not of that number. What then will become of you in the day of judgement? You will stand not on Christ's right hand, among the sheep, but on his left hand, among the goats. You will hear addressed to you, not those joyful words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," — but that dreadful sentence, "Depart, ye cursed." Think not that you will be able to avoid detection: that amidst so many millions, you will escape unseen, or will be reckoned among his people *then;* because you *appear* to belong to them *now*. Have not so vain a hope. He will divide them with unerring certainty. He "knoweth them that are his." He knoweth at this moment who among us belong to Him, and who belong to Him not. We are told that "two shall be in the field: the one shall be taken, and the other left;" that "two women shall be grinding at the mill: the one shall be taken, and the other left*;" and it is not improbable, but that in some instances the same aweful separation will take place between those who have shared the same religious advantages, attended the same church, heard the same sermons, and, perhaps, sat in the same seat; one shall be taken, and another left. — Seek,

* Matt. xxiv. 40, 41.

then, my brethren, that ye may now know Christ, and be known of Him. Blessed are those who gain this knowledge, "For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof, than of fine gold."—May I not call upon some, to bear witness to the truth? Some, who can declare, that they never knew true happiness till they knew Jesus Christ? To all such the view given in the text is full of comfort. In this light it particularly speaks to such as are poor and tempted, overwhelmed with trouble, or suffering the contempt and enmity of the world. My brethren, let me exhort all who answer this description; who are filled with fears of their own unworthiness; and, from the many difficulties in their path, are almost tempted to despair: Be not afraid. You are under the care of the "good Shepherd." He "knows his sheep." However mean may be your station, you are not overlooked by Him. However greatly your character may be mistaken by your fellow-creatures, you are well known to him. He perceives the desire of your heart; he hears your secret prayers; he sees his own image on your soul; and will publicly own you for *his*, "in that day when he shall make up his jewels."* In patience, then, possess your souls. And may "the

* Malachi, iii. 17.

God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." *

* Hebrews, xiii. 20, 21.

SERMON XIX.

PROMISE OF STRENGTH AND PEACE.

PSALM XXIX. 11.

The Lord will give Strength unto his People: the Lord will bless his People with Peace.

THE Bible abounds with "exceeding great and precious promises;" and it is one part of a Minister's duty to make a right application of them. He must try to give the comfort which they contain to those for whom it is intended; and to prevent others from taking it to themselves, and thus from "wresting the Scriptures to their own destruction." To this end he is required not only to show the *meaning* of any particular promise on which he may choose to discourse, but also clearly to point out the *persons* to whom the promise is given, and to whom therefore the comfort contained in it belongs. These are the objects which I shall have in view, while I discourse on the promise in the text: "The Lord will give Strength unto his People, the Lord will

bless his People with peace." I shall accordingly show,

I. What is the value of the blessings here promised.

II. Who are the Lord's People to whom these blessings belong.

I. The blessings here promised are two, Strength and Peace. — Let us consider them separately. "The Lord will give Strength unto his People." To estimate the value of this blessing, we must understand the need which the Lord's People have of it; with how many powerful enemies they have to contend; and what utter weakness they have in themselves.

The Lord's People have to contend,

1. With the *Powers of darkness.* They wrestle not "against flesh and blood," that is, against those only, but "against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Their "adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour*;" and if he failed not to assault the Lord himself when on earth, much less will he fail to assault his people, over whom he is so much more likely to prevail. These indeed are the chief objects of his attack. Over the rest

* Ephes. vi. 12.—1 Pet. v. 8.

of mankind, who are "the children of disobedience," "taken captive by him at his will*," he rules with absolute dominion. But the Lord's people are, as it were, rebels against the government of Satan. They have escaped from his tyranny, and are setting his power at defiance. Against them, therefore, his utmost fury, malice, and subtlety are directed.

2. They have to contend with the World. The World is a continual snare to the people of God. In every view it is an enemy greatly to be dreaded. Its smiles and frowns, its promises and threatenings, are equally dangerous to their peace and safety. It draws them from the path of duty by flattering prospects of pleasure, of wealth, of honour, of ease, or power. It strives to shake their firmness by the dread of poverty, shame, or persecution. If it fail of drawing them into compliance, with its own evil maxims and practices, it regards and treats them as enemies: it represents them as hypocrites and deceivers: loads them with reproachful names: and holds them up as the objects of ridicule and scorn.

3. They have to contend with their own natural depravity, and with remaining sin in their hearts. This, while it proves their

* Ephes. ii. 2.—2 Tim. ii. 26.

sorest enemy, shows the utter weakness they have in themselves. Assaulted at once by the world, and the devil, they have at the same time a traitor within, who secretly plots their ruin. By grace indeed they have received a new principle of spiritual life; but still the carnal principle is not entirely cast out. It is broken, but not destroyed. It does not reign as it once did: but it gives way unwillingly, and still struggles for the mastery. "The flesh lusteth against the spirit." Still they "find another law in their members warring against the law in their mind*:" so that "when they would do good, evil is present with them."

Such is the need which they have of the promised blessing. And hence we may estimate its value. Surrounded as they are by dangerous enemies, assaulted from without, and from within, having no strength in themselves, what precious words are these to the people of God: "The Lord will give *Strength* unto them." He will make them "stronger than their enemies," and will not suffer their foes to prevail against them. He will "grant they may have power and strength to have victory, and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh." Satan may "desire to have

* Gal. v. 17.—Romans, vii. 23.

them, that he may sift them as wheat;" but the Lord will pray for them, "that their faith fail not." * The world may assault them with every powerful temptation, but they shall be "delivered from this present evil world." † Sin may occasionally hinder and distress them; but it "shall not have dominion over them." ‡ In all difficulties the Lord will stand by them and strengthen them: will suit their grace to their need; will "not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able §;" will uphold them with his right hand on the bed of sickness, and at the hour of death; and will finally "keep them by his power through faith unto salvation." ‖

But the Lord will not only give Strength unto his people, he will also "bless them with *Peace.*" Peace is the great blessing of the Gospel. It is the legacy which the Lord has left his people. He said to his disciples, when he was about to be taken from them, "Peace I leave with you: my Peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." ¶

What then is the peace here meant?

In the first place, it is *Peace with God.* —

* Luke xxii. 31, 32.
‡ Rom. vi. 14.
‖ 1 Peter, i. 5.
† Gal. i. 4.
§ 1 Cor. x. 13.
¶ John, xiv. 27.

All men being born in sin, are "by nature children of wrath." They are "enemies to GOD by wicked works." * Sin is directly opposed to all his glorious attributes, and justly provokes his displeasure and vengeance. So that sinners in their natural state can have no peace with GOD. But Christ brings his people into a state of peace. He heals the breach which sin has made between them and GOD. By his cross he has slain the enmity, and has reconciled them to GOD by his own blood. "The chastisement of their peace was upon him, and by his stripes they are healed." † — Their sins being laid on Christ their surety, and the Divine Justice being fully appeased by his infinite sacrifice, GOD no longer regards them with wrath. His anger is turned away. He freely "accepts them in the beloved." ‡ For Christ's sake he receives them into favour: gives to them a name, and a place among his children; and bestows on them a title to heaven and to eternal life.

But this is not all. The peace here meant,

In the second place, is *Peace of mind.* Without this inward peace, the blessing of peace with GOD, so far as the present life is

* Ephes. ii. 3. — Col. i. 21. † Isaiah, liii. 5.
‡ Ephes. i. 6.

concerned, would be little understood or valued. Sin brings with it guilt, and shame, and fear. And though conscience for a time may sleep under the weight, yet when awakened, it will feel the burden to be intolerable. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" The sinner under a sense of unpardoned sin can know no peace. But Christ gives it to his people. He heals the wounded spirit, and binds up the broken heart. "He speaks Peace unto his people and to his Saints." He "gives to them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."* He leads them to rely with an humble confidence on his merits, mercies, and promises. He teaches them by faith to "behold him as the Lamb of GOD, which taketh away the sin of the world." He enables them, through grace, to look up to GOD, no longer as an offended Judge, but as a reconciled and loving Father. Thus are their guilty fears removed. Thus is the burden taken away from their conscience. Fully convinced of the divine wisdom, goodness, and mercy, they "commit their ways unto the Lord." They "cast all their care upon him," knowing that "he careth for them." In an humble hope that "all things shall work together for their"

* Isaiah, lxi. 3.

spiritual and eternal "good," they wait for the events which may befall them here, with confidence and composure. Though they may be "troubled on every side," yet are they "not distressed;" though "perplexed," yet "not in despair." * Death, which is so frightful an object to others, to them has lost its terrors. They look forward to it without dismay. They leave to the Lord both the time and the manner of their departure out of life. They see his hand, they own his wisdom, they submit to his will in every dispensation. In the darkest season of trial and affliction, they are yet enabled "in patience to possess their souls," and with even something of a triumphant air to say, "We know whom we have believed." †

Such is the peace here meant: "Peace of mind, arising from a sense of Peace with GOD. Such is the peace with which the Lord promises to bless his people. And who can fully estimate the value of this blessing? It must be felt in order to be known. It is that "Peace of GOD; which passeth all understanding:" that secret "joy with which a stranger doth not intermeddle:" that love "of God shed abroad in our

* 2 Cor. iv. 8. † 2 Tim. i. 12.

hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." *

Having thus endeavoured to point out the value of the blessings promised in the text, I shall now proceed,

II. To show who are the Lord's People, to whom these blessings belong.

Many are the marks which the Bible gives of the Lord's people. Indeed it seldom happens, but that the promises themselves furnish us with some means of tracing out the persons to whom alone they belong. Thus the promise in the text, though it does not undertake to describe the people of the Lord, yet enables us with sufficient clearness to point out who they are. Are Strength and Peace the blessings promised? Then the Lord's people are they who value these blessings; who feel their need of them, and are earnestly seeking of Him an interest in them.

Man naturally feels no need of the Strength here promised. He is unconscious of the dangers with which he is beset, and of his own inabilities for meeting them. He has no knowledge of the many spiritual adversaries which are ever present with him, and are leaving no means untried of destroying his

* Phil. iv. 7.—Prov. xiv. 10.—Rom. v. 5.

soul. As for the world, far from regarding it as an enemy of which he has just reason to be constantly afraid, he looks upon it with delight, and gives to it the first place in his heart. Instead of anxiously watching against the temptations to which it daily exposes him, he embraces with eagerness its deceitful offers, and rushes without fear into the snares which it spreads for him. Of his own heart, he is equally ignorant. He flatters himself, that although, through the force of bad examples and the violence of evil passions, he may be sometimes drawn into sinful tempers and actions, yet at the bottom his heart is good. He is not, in his own idea, naturally and deeply corrupt. His intentions at least are upright. He can safely trust to his own resolutions, and has no fear but that all will end well at last. Persons thus secure and confident, must listen with indifference to the promise of spiritual strength. They cannot value it, for they feel no need of it, nor see in it any excellence.

Very different is the case with the Lord's people. They have been taught of God to see their danger, and to feel their weakness. They are "not altogether ignorant of Satan's devices;" of the delusions of the world; of the deceitfulness of their own hearts.

Hence they value the Promise in the text. The strength which it proposes to bestow, is the very thing of which they stand in need. Has the Lord promised to bestow it? To him they apply for it. They seek it of him in humble and constant prayer. They wait upon him for it in all his appointed ordinances. Their earnest desire is to be "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man," to be made "strong in the grace that is in CHRIST JESUS:" and thus to be fitted for every good work.

Again, men naturally feel no need of spiritual peace. Not being convinced of the guilt and misery of sin, they cannot estimate the value of this blessing. They have no knowledge of that aweful breach which sin has made between their soul and GOD; they think not of the dreadful curse which disobedience to the divine commandments has brought upon them. They have lulled their conscience into a fatal sleep. If a doubt concerning their salvation sometimes arise, they soon get rid of it. What, though they have some faults, yet they have many pleasing qualities to make amends. They need not fear. "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Puffed up with such high notions of themselves,

they value not the offer of peace. They have peace already. Can they desire that, for which they feel no need?

But are such the feelings of the LORD's people? Is such their language? Are these their notions? Far otherwise. Their consciences have been awakened. Their eyes have been opened to see their real state. They have seen that they are sinners. They have trembled at the thoughts of that misery which sin has brought upon them. They are convinced, that there can be no real happiness but in the favour and love of GOD. They know that without reconciliation with their offended Maker, they must for ever perish. Peace with him is the blessing for which they long. A sense of his forgiveness only can give peace to their hearts. With transport then they receive the promise in the text.—Will the LORD give peace? What glorious tidings! How exactly suited to their wants! 'LORD,' they cry, 'unworthy as we are, bestow on 'us this blessing. Reconcile us to thyself 'through the blood of thy cross. Put away 'our iniquities far from us. Grant to us 'a comfortable hope of our pardon and 'acceptance. Speak peace to our troubled 'souls. "Make us to hear of joy and glad-

'nese, that the bones which thou hast broken 'may rejoice."'*

Such are the LORD's people. My brethren, have you reason to hope that you are of this happy number? Do you find on trial, that you possess those feelings, those dispositions, and desires, which distinguish the persons to whom this promise belongs? If there be but *one* who answers to this description, it becomes the minister of the Gospel to give to him all the comfort and encouragement which this most precious promise is capable of giving. If there be but *one*, who, under a conviction of his own weakness and guilt, is humbly waiting upon CHRIST for strength and peace, and if he ask, '*To whom* these blessings are promised?' Let it be instantly replied, '*To Him.*' — "Thou art the man." To thee this promise is given. Through fear that thou art not one of the LORD's people thou mayest perhaps distrust thy interest in the blessings. But distrust it not. If thou wert not one of the LORD's people thou wouldest have no desire for these blessings. If the LORD had not given to thee a heart to seek strength and peace of Him, thou wouldest not be seeking them. And because thou seekest, thou shalt find. Be then of good

* Psalm li. 8.

cheer, "Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." In thyself thou art weak and helpless, surrounded with many enemies, exposed to many trials, engaged in many conflicts. But fear not. The Lord will be thy strength. Let a sense of thy weakness lead thee to depend more humbly and entirely upon him; and thou shalt experience the truth of the Apostle's words, "When I am weak, then I am strong." — The Lord "will also bless thee with *Peace*." He has already made thy peace with GOD; and if he have not already shed abroad a sense of it in thy heart, yet hereafter he will certainly do it. If thou canst not at present look up to GOD with a comfortable persuasion of being at peace with him; yet tarry thou the Lord's leisure, and he will not leave thee comfortless. "Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord." * Be satisfied that all thy concerns are in the hands of infinite wisdom, mercy, and love. The Lord best knows for what reason he delays to fulfil his word to thee. But in due time he will fulfil it. Sooner or later he "will restore comfort to the mourners." He "will extend peace to thee, like a river." In the mean time, bear in mind the direction of

* Hosea, vi. 3.

the Prophet, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." *

But, my brethren, are there not some whose consciences witness against them, that they are *not* seeking strength and peace from Jesus Christ? If this be your case, then you belong not to the Lord's people. — Consider the misery of such a state. You have clearly no interest in the glorious blessings in the text. Without strength in yourselves, you have yet no precious promise of strength from the Lord. You have no security against the wiles of the devil, the snares of the world, and the lust of your own heart. "Taken captive by Satan at his will," you know not into what depths of wickedness you may at length be hurried. What pretensions then can you have to peace? You may promise to yourselves peace; but it is a deceitful hope. You may be crying "Peace," to yourselves, and may feel what you call peace in your hearts. But it is not a peace of the Lord's giving. It is a peace arising from a false security; a peace which will end in everlasting shame and misery. It is a peace, the fruit not of

* Isaiah, l. 10. — lvii. 18. — lxvi. 12.

a pacified, but of an unfeeling conscience. Your conscience sleeps, and from thence you falsely conclude, that all is well within. Were it once awakened, it would utter different truths. May it please the LORD to rouse you! May it please Him to strike conviction on your heart, before you learn, in a manner too dreadful to be described, the value of those promised Blessings which you now despise; before you awake out of your present sleep in that place of torment, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched!" There the door of mercy will be for ever shut. No farther offers of Strength and Peace will there be given. "To-day, then, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts." Lay hold of the promised blessings, while yet there is opportunity allowed; while yet the LORD is waiting to be gracious; while yet his ministers are "praying you in his stead, be ye reconciled to GOD."*

* 2 Cor. v. 20.

SERMON XX.

CHRIST'S SECOND COMING.

MALACHI, iii. 2.

But who may abide the Day of his Coming? And who shall stand, when He appeareth?

THE Coming of CHRIST is an event frequently mentioned in the Scriptures. But it is not always the same event which is intended by this expression. In some places it means the First coming of CHRIST into the world, his appearance in human nature. In other places it signifies his Second Coming, at the end of the world, to judge the quick and the dead. It is the first of these events to which the Prophet chiefly refers in the text: but we may look upon the other as also included in it. And it is in this sense that I mean to understand the passage. I shall consider the Coming here spoken of, as that Coming of CHRIST which is yet to take place, his Second Coming to

Judgement. In which view the question asked by the prophet, proposes to us a most solemn and important subject of enquiry. "Who may abide the day of his Coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth?" — I purpose, in discoursing on these words,

I. To remind you of some particulars in the Second Coming of Christ.

II. To answer the solemn Question here proposed.

1. Among the particulars of which I shall remind you, concerning the Second Coming of CHRIST, one is the *Certainty* of that event.

That Christ *will* come, is a point on which we are not left to doubt and conjecture. We have the plainest testimony which words can give. The Angels expressly told the Apostles at the Ascension of CHRIST, that "the same JESUS which had been taken up from them into heaven, should so come in like manner, as they had seen Him go into heaven."* Our Lord himself repeatedly spoke of his Second Coming: and all the Apostles, with one voice, proclaimed the same truth. St. Peter foretells, that there would arise in the world wicked men who should deny this truth. "There shall

* Acts, i. 11.

come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his Coming?" But to such presumptuous objectors the Apostle replies, by positively declaring the *Certainty* of the event — "The day of the LORD will come."*

The next particular which I shall notice, is the *Manner* of CHRIST's Second Coming.

It will be glorious. The first Coming of CHRIST was in all outward meanness and humiliation. He was born in a stable; He was wrapped in swaddling clothes; He was laid in a manger. He came "not with observation." Far from being distinguished by worldly pomp and wealth, he had no share in the things of this world: He "had not even where to lay his head." He was despised, persecuted, crucified. But his Second Coming will be in glory. It is called "the glorious appearing of the great GOD and our Saviour."† Sublime and magnificent are the descriptions given of this great event: "The Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him." "He shall come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." "He shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire." "The LORD

* 2 Peter, iii. 3, 4. 10. † Titus, iii. 13.

himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of GOD." "Behold the LORD cometh with ten thousand of his Saints."*

His coming shall be also sudden. Every moment which passes by, is bringing it nearer. Yet we are told, that it will at last come, when men are not expecting its arrival. "The day of the LORD so cometh as a thief in the night†," unlooked for, and unthought of. We are frequently reminded of this truth in the Scriptures. Our LORD himself expressly says, that "in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man cometh‡:" while in the following passage, he more particularly declares the same thing; "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the Ark: and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded: but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed

* Matt. xxv. 31.; xxiv. 30.—1 Thess. iv. 16.—2 Thess. i. 7, 8.—Jude, 14.

† 1 Thess. v. 2. ‡ Matt. xxiv. 42.

them all; even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed."*

To the Certainty and Manner of his coming, we may add, in the third place, the *Purpose* and the *Consequences* of it.

When CHRIST first came into the world, he tells us, that "He was come not to judge the world, but to save the world." In his state of humiliation he came as a Saviour. When he comes in glory, he will come in a different character. He will then come as a Judge; He "will sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations." He will not come to save, but to judge the world. Then, indeed, in the words of the prophet, immediately following the text, he will be "like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." He will separate the dross from the sterling gold. He will divide the chaff from the wheat, the goats from the sheep. He will make an aweful and everlasting distinction between the righteous and the wicked: and, by his just sentence, will assign to each the reward or the punishment, to which they are entitled. — He will condemn the wicked to everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. He will crown the righteous with everlasting glory in the kingdom of his Father.

* Luke, xvii. 26—30.

Having thus reminded you of some particulars concerning Christ's Second Coming, I shall now proceed,

II. To answer the solemn Question proposed to us in the text.

"Who may abide the day of his Coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth?" The meaning of this question is plain. "We must all stand before the Judgement-Seat of Christ:" but who among us will be able to bear that severe and close enquiry, which will then be made into our lives and characters? Who will stand with comfort, with confidence, with acceptance, in the presence of his heart-searching Judge, and will escape in that fearful Judgement? In answering this question, I shall show, in the first place, who those are, that will *not* be able to "abide the Day of Christ's Coming, and to stand before Him when he appeareth."

Among these we must first place every open and habitual sinner. The drunkard, the liar, the thief, the sabbath-breaker, the profane swearer, the impious scorner, the impure fornicator, the malicious, the envious, the revengeful man, the extortioner, and the oppressor: all these persons, and all such as these, will assuredly be unable to stand before Christ at his appearing. What-

ever they may now think; by whatever excuses they may now silence the voice of conscience; whatever peace they may now feel; whatever security they may now promise to themselves in their iniquities; very different will be their thoughts and feelings, when they shall be called before the Judgement-Seat of Christ. They will then see how vain are these excuses; how vast is their guilt. Their boasted confidence will fail. Their tongues, which here spoke so stout against the Lord, will be speechless. Their hearts will tremble and melt like wax. Unable to abide the presence of the Lord, they will be overwhelmed with horrible confusion. In anguish of soul they will say to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him, that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" *

To these persons we may add, secondly, the Worldly man: the man who has made this world his god, and has set up his idols in the heart, "the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eye, or the pride of life." All his days he has been constantly engaged in pushing his worldly interests. His treasure has been upon earth. His affections have

* Rev. vi. 16, 17.

been set on things below. The main employment of his time, of his thoughts, and of his talents, has been, how he may procure to himself a somewhat larger portion of worldly goods. Of such a man the world thinks favourably; and looks on him, it may be, with admiration and respect: for "the world will love its own;" and "men will praise thee; when thou doest well to thyself."* But what will become of such a man, "in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of GOD?" Will he be able to stand in that fearful Judgement? No. His idolatrous love of the world will then become his utter confusion. He will see his beloved Idol, the world, and all things in it, consumed with fire; and glad will he be, could he perish in the same flames, rather than stand before the face of his offended Judge. But he *must* stand before the Judge, and receive sentence together with those, who "having served the creature more than the Creator," have "held the truth in unrighteousness," and when they knew GOD, "glorified him not as GOD."

Let us turn, thirdly, to a person of another character, to the Hypocrite: to the man who has outwardly the appearance of

* Psalm xlvi. 18.

being religious, but is not really so within: who has the form of godliness, but is without the power of it; who calls himself the servant of Christ, "while his inward parts are very wickedness." Such characters, we may fear, are not uncommon in the world. At church they are outwardly godly and devout: but follow them home into their families, and see what marks of godliness you can find there. Is religion their business throughout the week, as well as their professed employment on the Sunday? Does it bring forth in them good fruit? Does it improve their tempers, amend their dispositions, or moderate their desires after worldly things? Does it lead them to deny themselves, to mortify their pride, to subdue their selfishness, to crucify the flesh? No. In all these respects they are no better than the openly irreligious. Will such persons then abide the day of Christ's coming? Will they stand when he appeareth? Alas! They may now flatter themselves that they shall endure that aweful judgement; but their deceitful hopes will soon expire. The books will be opened, and the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. Then shall the false professors of religion be detected and exposed. Their unmortified lusts, their unsubdued pride, their

worldly spirit, their allowed secret wickedness, shall be produced against them. Their whole character shall be made known to men and angels, and they shall be condemned by the general voice of all, as hypocrites and unbelievers, to whom shall be weeping and wailing for ever.

Look next to another character; to the man who is self-righteous, and trusts to his own merits and strength, who talks of *the goodness of his heart;* says that he has *done no harm;* and in proud self-sufficiency "blesses himself," that he "is not as other men are." 'If,' he secretly whispers to himself, 'If I have some failings, yet they are 'but few: and are abundantly overbalanced 'by many pleasing and useful qualities. My 'intentions are sincere and upright. My con-'science lays nothing to my charge. Surely 'I need not fear to stand before Christ in 'judgement.' Such is now the presumptuous language of his soul. But will such be his language in the day of which we are speaking? Will he think and speak thus, when he shall really stand before Christ at his appearing? Far otherwise. He will be covered with shame and confusion. His mouth will be stopped. For the book of the law will be opened, the spiritual and holy law

of God; and tried by this rule, the deficiency of his fancied merit will be fully seen. His conduct, which he thought so praise-worthy, will be found, in numberless instances, to have been sinful: nay, in those very instances in which it seemed to be most amiable, it will appear to have proceeded from selfish motives, and so to be defiled with sin. His heart, which he thought so good, will be shown to have been a fountain of all uncleanness, "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," utterly without humility, without faith in Jesus Christ, without love to God and man, and filled with pride and selfishness and evil passions. Exposed, confounded, self-convicted, where shall he hide his guilty head? whither shall he flee from his heart-searching Judge? How shall he escape the dreadful sentence, "Depart from me, thou worker of iniquity?"

But perhaps, my brethren, you begin to think that we are carrying things too far. You are ready to say, that according to this way of judging, we condemn all mankind; that not one is left, who shall abide the day of Christ's coming, and shall stand, when he appeareth. But it is not so. There is another character to be described; the humble, penitent, believing Christian; a charac-

ter widely differing from every other, which has been drawn, and easily to be distinguished from them all. He is not an open, nor an impenitent sinner. Whatever he may have formerly been, however deeply enslaved to sin, he is *now* a new creature in Christ Jesus. By the grace of the Gospel he has been brought to repent of his sins, to condemn himself on their account, and to forsake the practice of them. — He is not a worldly man. From a principle of conscience, and a sense of duty, he is attentive indeed to his worldly calling, and diligently performs the work committed to him. But his heart is not in these things. Defeat his worldly schemes; yet *his* hopes are not disappointed, for *they* are fixed on things above. Take away his worldly goods; yet *his* treasure is not touched; for *that* is placed in heaven. He lives not to the world, not to himself, but to GOD. — He is not an hypocrite. He does not wear a mask in the sight of man; nor under the cloak of a godly profession does he hide an ungodly heart. He is "an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile." His religion is not merely on the outside. His heart, indeed, is far from being perfect. Much remaining corruption still dwells within. But he watches, prays, and strives against it. Were it in his power, he would

be holy even as GOD is holy. That he still continues so unholy is a matter of most serious grief to him: while, amidst all his lamentations and complaints, the power of religion really gains ground in the heart, and shows its influence there, by purifying his affections, regulating his desires, improving his tempers, and by enabling him, in every part of his conduct, to bring forth much fruit unto holiness.—He is not self-righteous, nor trusts to his own merits and strength. On the contrary, he has renounced himself. He has been too deeply convinced of his own guilt and weakness to rely, even for a single moment, on any thing in himself. His dependence is solely on the mercy of GOD in Jesus Christ. It is Christ's righteousness, and not his own, in which he hopes to be found. It is the blood of Christ, to which he looks for the cleansing of his soul. It is the grace of Christ, and the supply of his Spirit, by which he hopes to withstand the enemies of his salvation, and to endure unto the end. His prayer, his constant prayer, is, "GOD be merciful to me a sinner." "Lord, save me, I perish." His declaration is, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." "By the grace of God, I am what I am."

Such is the real Christian. Such, my brethren, is the man, "who *will* abide the day of

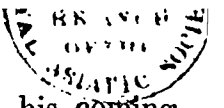
the Lord's coming, and *will* stand, when he appeareth. He indeed will not be able, any more than others, to stand on his own merits, to excuse his sins, or to justify his conduct. He will not be able, any more than others, to plead innocence, to say, 'I have 'done no harm.' No. But he will have other grounds on which to place his confidence. He will claim an interest in the death of Christ his Saviour. His plea will be, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." * His penitence, his uprightness, his secret striving with sin, his useful life, his godly motives, will be brought in evidence of the soundness and reality of his faith. The Judge himself will own him as a friend; will claim him as one of his people, for whom he died; will stop the accuser's mouth; will fully acquit him of every charge; and will welcome him into the joy of his Lord.

I have thus answered the solemn question in the text. I have shown you *who* the person is, that with comfort, with confidence, and with acceptance, will stand before the Lord at his appearing. It is the real Christian. By way, then, of application let me remind you, that it is in the power of every one of us to become such a person as I have here

* Rom. viii. 34.

described. We *may* all be real Christians. We may *all* have Jesus Christ for our friend and Saviour in the day of judgement. He is now waiting to be gracious. He is now inviting every sinner of every description to turn unto him, and to accept his offers of free forgiveness. The open and profane transgressor, the worldly man, the long-dissembling hypocrite, the self-righteous Pharisee, are all alike included in his merciful invitations. He bids all to forsake their evil ways, and in true faith and repentance to come unto him, and he will give them rest: he will give them peace now, and confidence in the day of his appearing. He assures them, that while others shall be overwhelmed with horrible fear before him at his coming, those who have fled to him for refuge, shall in that day lift up their heads with joy.

My brethren, may you have grace to lay these things to heart! Consider the *certainty* of Christ's second coming. He will surely come. Consider the *manner* of his coming. You shall yourselves be witnesses of his glory: for "every eye shall see Him." You know not how soon he may come. You know not how suddenly you may be called before his judgement-seat. Consider the *consequences* of his coming. He will come to fix you in everlasting happiness, or in eternal



misery. Be ready, then, for his coming. Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. "Prepare to meet your GOD." Live under a constant expectation of his appearing: so that when he shall really appear, you may be enabled in that day to say, "Lo, this is our GOD: we have waited for him, and he will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.*

* Isaiah, xxv. 9.

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